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BHOGESWAR-KANAKA GOHAIN MEMORIAL LECTURE

BHAGAVADGĪTĀ AS KARMAŚĀSTRA

DR SITANATH GOSWAMI



ASAM SAHITYA SABHA



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DR. SITANATH GOSWAMI

ASAM SAHITYA SABHA
Chandrakanta Handiqui Bhavan
Jorhat - 785001 : Assam

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BHAGAVADGĪTĀ AS KARMAŚĀSTRA :— Lectures organised by Asam Sahitya Sabha, in memory of Bhogeswar-Kanaka Gohain with the help of Bhogeswar-Kanaka Gohain Trust Fund instituted by Sri Lambodar Gohain, delivered by Prof. Dr. Sitanath Goswami of Jadavpur University, West Bengal.

Published by Sri Nahendra Padun General Secretary, Asam Sahitya Sabha,
Chandrakanta Handiqui Bhawan,
Jorhat - 1, Assam, 1991

First Published in September 1991

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Price Rs : 20.00

520 (X)

Printed at
Nabajiban Press
66 Grey Street, Calcutta - 700 006



PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The BHAGAVADGĪTĀ AS KARMAŚĀSTRA is the book form of the first Bhogeswar-Kanaka Memorial Lecture, organised by Asam Sahitya Sabha and delivered by Prof. Sitanath Goswami of the University of Jadavpur in the early part of the year 1989 at Dibrugarh.

It was for his deep love and respect for his demised parents, and for his attraction towards the studies in religion, culture and philosophy that Shri Lambodar Gohain desired to get instituted a Memorial Trust by Asam Sahitya Sabha in memory of his parents, with a view to arranging biennial Memorial Lectures on the topics relating to the fields as mentioned, and get each lecture brought out in a book form. Accordingly a Deed of Trust was signed and Asam Sahitya Sabha made necessary programmes for the first lecture. Shri Amal Rajkhowa, the then General Secretary of the Sabha, stated elaborately about the Trust in his Secretarial Report which is incorporated therein.

We hope, the present volume would throw bright lights on the subject and inspire many to study the Bhagavadgita and the great philosophical principles it contains, with a new angle.

I, on behalf of Asam Sahitya Sabha, owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Sitanath Goswami for his valuable lectures which have put the wheel of the "Bhogeswar Kanaka Memorial Trust" on move.

I would also like to put on record that it is for nobody but Shri Lambodar Gohain that the Sabha could start such a noble venture to hold lectures on the subjects fall broadly within the orbit of the studies in religion, culture and philosophy. I, on behalf of the Sabha, owe special thanks to Shri Gohain for his donation for instituting the said Memorial Trust.

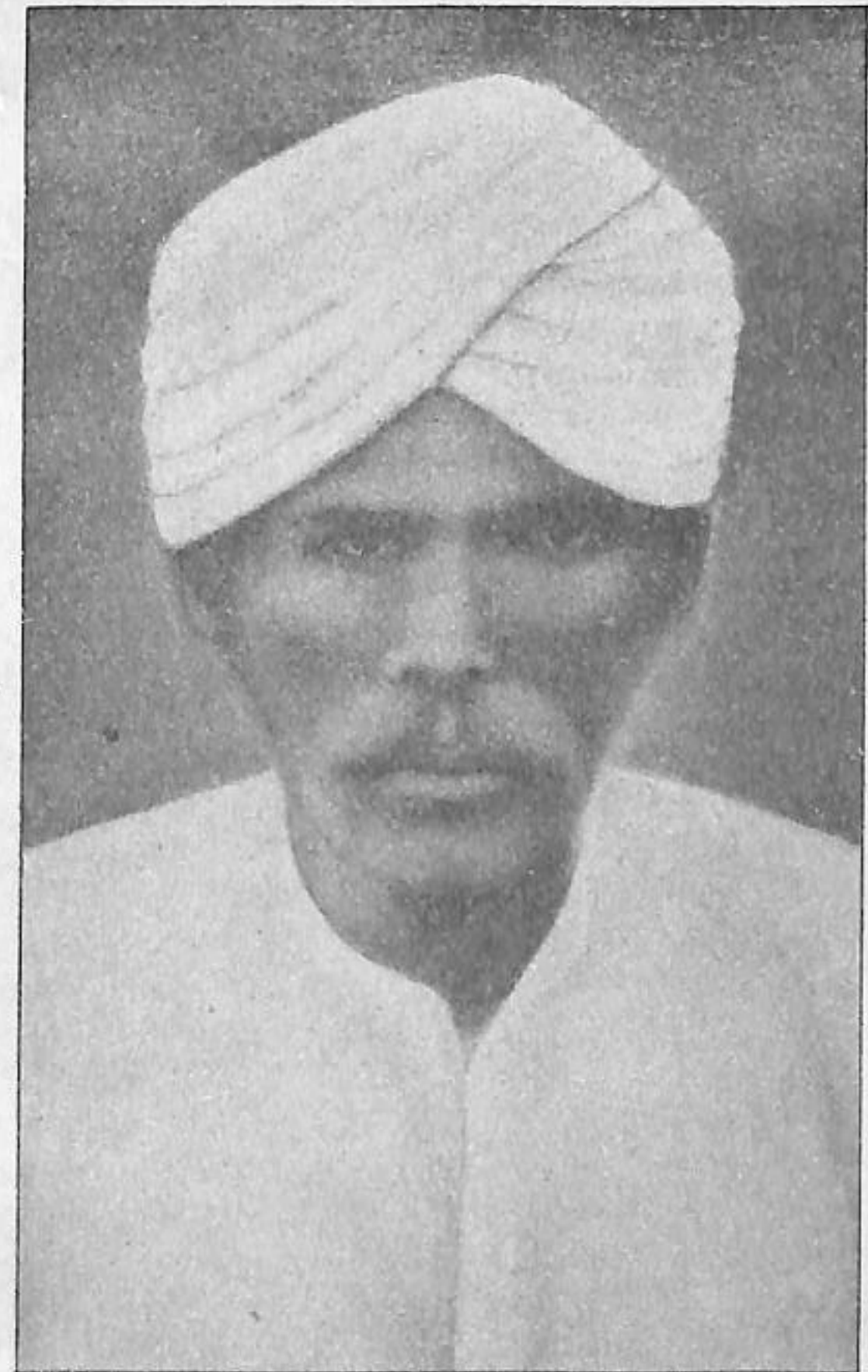
In bringing out this thin volume, Dr. Nagen Saikia and Shri Prafulla Chandra Bhattacharyya helped the Sabha as and when required. My heart-felt thanks to Dr. Saikia and also to Shri Bhattacharyya.

Nabajiban Press of Calcutta deserves thanks for nice printing of the book.

Lastly, I beg to be excused for the printing mistakes left here and there.

1 November, 1991
Chandrakanta Handiqui Bhavan
Jorhat-1, Assam

Nahendra Padun
General Secretary
Asam Sahitya Sabha



Bhogeswar Gohain



Kanaka Gohain

BHOGESWAR GOHAIN AND KANAKA GOHAIN – A SHORT LIFE SKETCH

Bhogeswar Gohain was born to a poor peasant's family of Konwarpur Tepartali Gohaingaon in the district of Sibsagarh in the eighth decade of the nineteenth century. The exact date of his birth is not known as the family did not keep his horoscope or any other record of birth. He died on 16th August 1947, at the ripe age of seventy five which itself has been ascertained from the ages of the other members of the family still living. We can roughly assume that he was born not later than 1872. Kanaka Gohain, his wife died on 30th July 1938 at the mature age of sixty two.

Gohaindeo grew up in a peaceful rural environment. He went to school like the other boys of a typical Assamese village, but poverty cut short his education at the primary school level. As the circumstances compelled him to look after his paternal family, he took up the job of a mandal in the Revenue Department of the Government. He started with a salary of three rupees a month. He was working in that capacity for ten years when he got a break. He was appointed a clerk in the Deputy Commissioner's Court, Sibsagar, at a monthly salary of twelve rupees only. It appears, he was not happy with this new job. Soon after, he left this service to become an all time farmer. He did well in this occupation. By dint of hard work, honesty and integrity, he was going to establish himself as a prosperous gentleman farmer, when an unforeseen incident clouded his fortunes. He had been a Guarantor to a certain Maujadar, a friend of his. This Maujadar was caught misappropriating Government revenue and was heavily fined. The property of Gohaindeo, the Guarantor was confiscated by the Government. Luckily for him, a good Samaritan in the person of a friend came to his rescue. The friend purchased for him a plantation of betel nut trees and vines. With the income from this small plantation, Gohaindeo could just meet the bare necessities of his family, charmed by the rare qualities of Gohaindeo, the friend came forward to stand beside him in those days of distress.

In the later part of his life, Bhogeswar Gohain settled down near Suphrai in the district of Sibsagarh. He endeared himself to

one and all by his kind heartedness and amiable qualities. He believed in the ideal of plain living and high thinking. Deprived himself of higher education, he saw to it that his children did not suffer from lack of it. He struggled hard to give his son a good higher education.

In his struggle for existence, Gohaindeo had the good fortune to receive the constant support from his wife Kanaka. She was a simple illiterate woman, but excellent housewife. She was good at all the household chores that an Assamese woman in the bygone days was supposed to be. She was a kind hearted, Godfearing lady loved and respected by all. She was an expert in the Assamese style of cooking, and the delicacies she prepared to entertain her relations and guests both townsmen and villagers were long remembered by those who had tasted them. Thus Bhogeswar and Kanaka made an ideal pair.

Preface

At the request of Asam Sahitya Sabha I wrote this monograph in September, 1988 as the Bhogeswar. Kanaka Memorial Endowment Lecture". which was delivered at Dibrugarh in February, 1989. The subject selected by Asam Sahitya Sabha was liked by me because the topic had offered an opportunity to write a few words in support of *karman*, the crying need of the day. In my life I never felt the so-called proverbial opposition between *karman* (action) and *jñāna* (knowledge). Although personal experiences and assessments differ as to the supremacy or otherwise of one or the other, it is no denying the fact that at some particular moments of life action is deemed more efficacious, and on some other occasions a person considers action to be meaningless, although willy-nilly he works and has to work in some form or other. A man capable of giving up all desires and performing action with a sense of resignation attains knowledge. The opposition of action and knowledge occurs for the desire for result of the deed performed ; but in the event of absence of desire for result a person feels absolute knowledge and best actions being in utmost consistency as they were found in *Śrībhagavān* as per His express statement—

न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किंचन ।
नानवाप्तमवाप्तव्यं वर्त एव च कर्मणि ॥ (3.22)

As regards respectability the Vedas occupy the highest position among all the ancient texts of India but it is the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* which has been widely accepted by the majority of the people for its spiritual and philosophical aspect. People belonging to any level of understanding find clues for the elevation of standard in

any particular field of their interest by going through this single volume of only seven hundred verses.

The uniqueness of the *Gītā* is evident from the fact that even Bhagavān cannot instruct the *Gītā* the second time. At the end of the war Kṛṣṇa feels the necessity of going back to Dvārakā since his mission has been fulfilled. The rule of dharma has been established and Yudhiṣṭhira has justly got back his Kingdom. Kṛṣṇa further says to Arjuna that he desires to meet his father, relatives and other people. Thus he proposes that he may be permitted to go to Dvaraka. Arjuna's assistance also is sought for persuading Yudhiṣṭhira to bid farewell sunon (Mbh 14.15.12-35). Now Arjuna's first concern is that he has forgotten the instructions which were imparted earlier in the battlefield. Owing to his oblivion Arjuna is ashamed and confesses his inability to retain all those for the absence of proper mental discipline, and also expresses the desire to listen to those words again before Kṛṣṇa leaves for Dvārakā.

यत्तद् भगवता प्रोक्तं पुरा केशव सौहृदात् ।

तत् सर्वं पुरुषव्याघ्र नष्टं मे भ्रष्टचेतसः ॥

मम कौतूहलं त्वस्ति तेष्वर्थेषु पुनःपुनः ।

भवांस्तु द्वारकां गन्ता नचिरादिव माघव ॥ (Mbh 14.16.6-7)

To this Kṛṣṇa shows his displeasure because Arjuna out of his evil tendencies and lack of proper care and concentration has forgotten something that cannot be repeated by Kṛṣṇa even.

अबुद्ध्या नाग्रहीर्यस्त्वं तन्मे सुमहदप्रियम् ।

न च साद्य पुनर्भूयः स्मृतिर्मे सम्भविष्यति ॥ (Mbh 14.16.10)

But in order to satisfy Arjuna Kṛṣṇa goes on narrating the conversation of some persons and also catechismal spiritual discussions which are in essence similar to those uttered by Bhagavān in the battlefield. During the narration Kṛṣṇa draws the attention of Arjuna and admonishes him to be very careful this time.

कच्चिदेतत् त्वया पार्थ श्रुतमेकाग्रचेतसा ।

तदापि हि रथस्थस्त्वं श्रुतवानेतदेव हि ॥ (Mbh 14.19.55)

At the end of this subsequent instruction (*Anugītā*; *anu* = subsequent) also Kṛṣṇa again reminds Arjuna to be fully restrained and to devote full attention because in essence this instruction is similar to the earlier one, and perhaps also because Arjuna will have no more chance to listen to such advice.

पूर्वमप्येतदेवोक्तं युद्धकाल उपस्थिते ।

मया तव महाबाहो तस्मादत्र मनः कुरु ॥ (Mbh 14.51.49)

Kṛṣṇa further advises that mere attentive audition will not serve the ultimate purpose but a person has to behave accordingly (सम्यगावर सुव्रत—Mbh 14.51.47)

This *Anugītā* lacks in the unfoldment of Kṛṣṇa's universal form (*viśvarūpa*), an event that turns the mental situation of the great hero, Arjuna, to whom is revealed the omnipresence of Bhagavān, and by whom the entire universe is perceived in all its facets in the physique of Bhagavān. Now after the long instruction running through the 36 chapters of *Anugītā* Kṛṣṇa is perhaps not satisfied owing to the non-revealing of the universal form, and probably for this reason just the next day when he meets *Utaṅka*, a good ascetic endowed with the accumulation of sufficient penance, on his way to Dvārakā shows this universal form.

ततः स तस्मै प्रीतात्मा दर्शयामास तद्वपुः ।

शाश्वतं वैष्णवं धीमान् ददृशे यद्धनञ्जयः ॥ (Mbh 14.55.4)

Further, this *Anugītā* being not a direct conversation of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna but being only a second-hand material in the form of the recounting of ancient historical-cum-didactic tales loses much of its importance. Even a casual reader notices the difference in spontaneity and charming excellence.

The *Anugītā* is taught when the majority of the kings and valiant persons are dead, when the royal house is fully devastated, and in all respects there is an indication of sharp decline which proclaims the transitoriness of the world. Whereas the number 18 of the chapters of the *Gītā* means *jaya* (victory), the number 36 of the chapters of the *Anugītā* signifies *cala* (transitory) because the figure 6 indicates the sixth mute (*sparsavarṇa*) i.e. च (*ca*) and the figure 3 indicates the third semivowel (*antasthavarṇa*) i.e. ल (*la*). [The Sanskrit procedure of expressing a figure in words is explained in p. 15]

The *Gītā* teaches that so long as the ultimate knowledge does not dawn upon us, we should be very practical in our life (2.31-36). In our struggle for freedom during the early decades of the twentieth century the *Gītā* has played an important role. The revolutionaries drew the sap of their difficult and dangerous, idealistic and carefree active life from this *Gītā*. These so-called rebels held in their right hand this book, the *Gītā*, and in their left hand a revolver, but at the time of revolutionary operation these two items viz. the *Gītā* and revolver changed hands. The contribution of the *Gītā* in the freedom movement has been manifold, and this side of the episode must not be forgotten.

The *Gītā* is sometimes mistaken as a religious text but the *Gītā* does not contain only the mode of worship but it pervades the entire life, thought and action of all human beings, and in this connexion the philosophy of the mode of worship is mentioned as a necessity since otherwise an essential or a very important aspect of life would be dropped. The essence of worship is renunciation i.e. giving up or offering of an object to a higher and sublime entity. This is discussed in detail in Chapter V. The age-old tradition of offering precious objects created a misconception in many people that the more costlier the object is, the more sincerity is expressed by the worshipper. *Śrībhagavān* articulates in unequivocal terms that the cost, rarity and the pomp are most immaterial for Him, and that He likes much the

devotion, i.e. the urge for offering with full concentration, and an open sublime heart. It may be quoted now from the *Gītā*—

यत्र पुष्पं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति ।
तदहं भक्त्युपहृतमश्नामि प्रयतात्मनः ॥ (9.26)

Although the *Gītā* has transgressed all limits of caste and creed, race and tribe, faith and belief, religion and culture, it is sometimes very wrongly considered as a communalistic treatise to be read, respected and followed by the Hindus only. The superbly magnanimous approach of the *Gītā* has been appreciated by the scholars of all ages and of all countries. There is not even an iota of sectarianism or parochialism in the *Gītā*; on the contrary, it professes universalism, (p. 70-71) love for all beings, egalitarianism not only in rights but also in understanding that can be attained by a person with noble heart not pestered by any selfish desire.

सन्नियम्येन्द्रियग्रामं सर्वत्र समबुद्धयः ।
ते प्राप्नुवन्ति मामेव सर्वभूतहिते रताः ॥ (12.4)

During this last decade of the twentieth century when the world is seething with discontent, madness for unholy competition, arms race, insatiable lust, craze for strangeness, eccentricity etc., it is the *Gītā* which teaches, through all its eighteen chapters, the way to attain peace and tranquillity, calmness and equanimity, equilibrium and sobriety. The ebullient world needs the *Gītā*.

Our country, the sacred land where Kṛṣṇa was born and the *Gītā* was taught, is also passing through a difficult state when the majority of the people is lying below poverty line, denied proper education, suffering from superstition, disease, natural calamities and what not. The educated people are, to a great extent, enamoured of western culture which they cannot fully adopt, nor can they adjust themselves to the situation prevalent in common mass. The nationalist sentiments grew

rampant during the nationalistic movements of the first half of this century but with the attainment of independence a sort of self-satisfaction and petty selfishness began to grow engendering a mean careerism without any consideration, in many cases, of national interest. It pains me to comment that the people in general have lost the respect for national heritage in a crazy enthusiasm for internationalism and ultramodernism. It is strange, and perhaps an irony of fate too, that the new generation is more eager to know the world than to know the country. We must not forget that our existence will be jeopardized if our country cannot develop as a nation and is divested of its culture and heritage. The *Gītā* is the book which can imbue us with nationalism and internationalism, self-knowledge and universalism, love for humanity and above all a passion for work. During the last two decades an agitational culture has developed with detriment to work-culture. Now serious impediments to work are coming from diverse agencies. Production has seriously gone down. Leaders' requests and appeals for work are becoming totally ineffective. The *Gītā* has preached work-culture and sufficient cogent arguments are adduced in favour of ceaseless work and hard toil. Thus the *Gītā* should be deemed a National Text, and encouragement to study of it must be given in diverse ways.

Before completing this Preface I take the opportunity of offering sincere thanks and gratitude to Asam Sahitya Sabha for giving me a chance to discuss the direct words of Bhagavān at whose will the entire universe is moving and functioning. As destined by Him I complete this task of writing this Preface, and the monograph, as assigned by Asam Sahitya Sabha on this sacred day of *ambuvācī*, when special *pūjas* are offered to *Kamākhyā*, the presiding deity of Asama Pradesh. I am grateful to Sri Lambodar Gohain, Prof. Prafulla Chandra Bhattacharya of Dibrugarh for their warm welcome and hospitality, and also to Sri Amal Rajkhowa, the then Secretary of the Sabha, for hearty reception. It is my good luck that I had

the elite of Assam at Dibrugarh as the listeners to the lecture delivered. Words fail to express my gratitude to all of them.

I owe much to my illustrious student, Dr. Himansu Narayan Chakravarti, the Head of the Department of Sanskrit, Jadavpur University, for his suggestions, patient hearing and emendations. Srīman Hridish Narayan, son of Dr. Chakravarti, a boy of 12 years, has always encouraged me by his queries about the completion of the book. I bless him from the core of my heart. Nabajiban Press authorities deserve hearty thanks for their sincerity and love for work.

At last this humble self offers innumerable salutations to the holy feet of his family deity, *Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu*, of whose holy consort *Śrī Viṣṇupriyā*'s brother *Yādavācārya* this humble self comes as the eleventh generation.

Professor of Sanskrit,
Jadavpur University
24-6-1991

Sitanath Goswami

CONTENTS

	Page
Publisher's Note	iii
Brief life Sketch of Bhogeswar Gohain and Kanaka Gohain	v
Preface	vii
Chapter I - Introduction	1
Chapter II - <i>Karman</i> as the Purport of the <i>Gītā</i>	7
Chapter III - Karmayoga	22
Chapter IV - <i>Karman</i> , <i>Māyā</i> and Sublimation of <i>Karman</i>	39
Chapter V - Meaning of <i>Yajña</i> , and Performance of Duty	51
Chapter VI - Synthesis	67
Index I - Abbreviations	73
Index II - <i>Gītā-śloka-s</i> Referred to and Explained	74
Index III - Important Concepts and Words	76

CHAPTER—I

Introduction

Śrīmadbhagavadgītā means 'sung or said¹ by Śrībhagavān'. It is an adjective requiring a noun for construction. What is that noun word? It is "Upaniṣad" which is sung or said by Śrībhagavān. Upaniṣad is a feminine word, and thus the adjective also is feminine—*Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*. This book is a part and parcel of the *Mahābhārata* occurring in the *Bhīṣmaparvan*. Although it is in the *Mahābhārata* written by Vyāsa, it is respected as the Upaniṣad and considered by traditional scholars to be at par with the Upaniṣads, which are eternal and unwritten by any being (*nitya* and *apauruṣeya*). This conversation between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna possesses the quintessence of all the Upaniṣads. Hence this book is not only an Upaniṣad but it is the totality of all Upaniṣads. In the colophon of each chapter we recite "*Śrīmadbhagavadgītāsu Upaniṣatsu*" in plural number inasmuch as it epitomizes the one hundred odd Upaniṣads.

Gītā is the cream of Upaniṣad.

This excellent feature of SBG being the cream of the Upaniṣads is borne out in the following well-known fourth *śloka* of the *maṅgalācaraṇa* of SBG—

सर्वोपनिषदो गावो दोग्धा गोपालनन्दनः ।

पार्थो वत्सः सुधीर्भोक्ता दुग्धं गीतामृतं महत् ॥

The literal translation of the *śloka* is—All the Upaniṣads are the milch cows, Kṛṣṇa is the milker,

1. The root *gai* means 'to make sound' i.e. to sing, to speak, cf. १ छन्दे (*Siddhāntakaumudī*, 917, *bhavadī*)

Arjuna is the calf, an intelligent and discerning person is the consumer-cum-enjoyer, and the huge quantity of nectar in the form of the *Gītā* is the milk. Here we may note that the task of milking is being performed by a person no less than Kṛṣṇa, and therefore the essence of the Upaniṣads has properly been extracted in this SBG. The milch cow releases milk out of affection for her child, but other people knowing the utility and exceptionally nutritive value of the milk consume and relish. So also the instruction in the *Gītā*, although imparted to Arjuna, is exploited judiciously by the intelligent inquirer. The milk obtained from the cow is limited and therefore can be consumed by some, and once consumed cannot be restored whereas the *Gītā* is endless nectar which is never exhausted but can be tasted, relished and enjoyed eternally by innumerable persons provided they have the required mental frame of accepting such a priceless commodity.

***Gītā* is a shortened form of a bigger name.**

The religious, philosophical and ethical standards attained by this work rise to such a high level that later on the name of this treatise is shortened to Bhagavadgītā, and subsequently further curtailed as only *Gītā*. This enviable position of the *Gītā* allured many of the authors to use this appellation for their works, but of course with an adjunct as Īśvara, Vyāsa etc². In the *Mahābhārata* also there are several other *Gītā*-s besides this SBG³.

2. *Īśvaragītā* appears in *Kūrmapurāṇa*, Part II, Chapters 1 to 11, *Vyāsagītā* follows next, from Chapter 12.

3. Some of the *Gītā*-s are being mentioned with the location in the Mbh :—*Utathyagītā*—12.90-91; *Vāmadevagītā*—12.92-94; *Śampākakagītā*—12.176; *Māṅkagītā*—12.177; *Bodhyagītā*—12.178; *Vṛtragītā*—12.278; *Hārtagītā*—12.277; *Śaḍjagītā*—12.167; *Rṣabhagītā*—12.125-128; *Vicakṣnugītā*—12.264; *Anugītā*—14.16-51.

Preamble of the discussion.

The Upaniṣads constitute the primary Vedānta, and secondarily some other works also are known as Vedānta. It is admitted by all *ācārya*-s of all the sub-systems of Vedānta that this system (i.e. Vedānta) comprises three *prasthāna*-s viz. (i) *Śruti* or the Upaniṣad, (ii) *Smṛti* or the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata* etc. especially SBG, and (iii) *Nyāya* i.e. *Brahmasūtra*. Thus SBG is a work on Vedānta, and accordingly the *ācārya*-s of the various Vedantic systems have left no stone unturned to explain and interpret this work and all the texts of all the three *prasthāna*-s in a manner, sometimes even laboriously distorting the text, just to fit in with their own doctrine. The followers of each school are more or less convinced that theirs is the most accurate and faithful interpretation of the original texts⁴. With this preamble we may commence our discussion.

Position of *karman* in the Vedantic systems.

The systems of Indian philosophy clinch on certain cardinal issues as Self, the Supreme Self and the individual Self, the world, bondage and release, mode of release etc. Release or emancipation i.e. *mokṣa* is the ultimate aim of all human beings, and the philosophical systems have tried in their own way to prescribe some method for release. Some have laid special stress on *karman*, others on *bhakti* and some others on knowledge. The Vedantic systems have been inclined

4. "The Advaitic commentator, whenever an Advaitic text comes, preserves it just as it is; but the same commentator, as soon as a dualistic text presents itself, tortures it if he can, and brings the most queer meaning out of it. Sometimes the 'Unborn' becomes a 'goat', such are the wonderful changes effected...In the same way, if not in a still worse fashion, the texts are handled by the dualistic commentator. Every dualistic text is preserved, and every text that speaks of non-dualistic philosophy is tortured in fashion he likes." (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. III, p. 233).

either to knowledge or to devotion, although deeds (*karman*) have not been neglected. The philosophical systems, especially the various sects of the Vedānta system, have riveted their attention on release or salvation for the attainment of which deeds, rather unattached deeds, have some preparatory but important role. These unattached deeds make such a good grounding that the subsequent step of knowledge or devotion, as the case may be, becomes almost assured.

Karman is a means to attaining mokṣa.

Bhagavān Himself has accepted *karman* as a successful means to the achievement of the ultimate goal i.e. attainment of the Supreme Self. The *Gītā* has this singularity of synthesizing the various shades of opinion prevalent among the celebrated schools of philosophy. Here Bhagavān holds that some persons attain the Supreme Self through meditation (*dhyāna*), some others attain this through knowledge (*sāṅkhya-yoga*) and some again get this through unattached deeds (*karma-yoga*). Some more being unable to rise to that level of spiritual upliftment have recourse to some other methods as per the instructions of the enlightened persons, and stick to that particular course with utmost sincerity and eagerness. These people also succeed in going across death. The relevant *śloka*-s may be quoted here—

ध्यानेनात्मनि पश्यन्ति केचिदात्मानमात्मना ।
अन्ये सांख्येन योगेन कर्मयोगेन चापरे ॥
अन्ये त्वेवमजानन्तः श्रुत्वान्येभ्य उपासते ।
तेऽपि चातितरन्त्येव मृत्युं श्रुतिपरायणाः ॥

(SBG 13.24-25)

Karmayoga and the Vedantic systems.

It is to be noted that none of the Vedāntic systems has accepted *Karma-yoga* as an independent means capable of attaining the Supreme Self ; on the contrary, these systems have placed it in a position subservient to either knowledge or devotion or both. Not only that, even *dhyāna* is equated to knowledge or devotion. Śaṅkara and his followers have accepted *dhyāna* or

meditation as a state of prolonged knowledge through which the supreme knowledge dawns and release comes⁵. Rāmānuja has understood devotion by the word *dhyāna*⁶. Ānandatīrtha or Madhva does not explain the word.

Śaṅkara accepts *karman* only as a means to the attainment of knowledge through which salvation is possible. *Karman* is denied its proper status as an independent means to salvation⁷. Rāmānuja admits both knowledge and action as subservient to devotion⁸. According to Vallabha *dharma* or action is resorted to for attainment of release through knowledge and devotion⁹. yāmunaṁṇi of the Rāmānuja sect has stated clearly that *bhakti* or devotion is attained through knowledge and action¹⁰, and that *Brahman* is realised through *bhakti* only¹¹.

5. “तैलघारावत् सन्ततोऽविच्छिन्नप्रत्ययो ध्यानम् । तेन ध्यानेनात्मनि बुद्धी पश्यन्त्यात्मानं प्रत्यक्चेतनमात्मना ध्यानसंस्कृतेनान्तःकरणेन केचिद् योगिनः ।” (शाङ्करभाष्य, गीता १३/३४)
“ध्यानेन विजातीयप्रत्ययानन्तरितेन सजातीयप्रत्ययप्रवाहेण....” (मधुसूदन, तत्रैव)

6. “ध्यानेन भक्तियोगेन” (रामानुज, तत्रैव)

7. “अभ्युदयार्थोऽपि यः प्रवृत्तिलक्षणो धर्मो वर्णानाश्रमांश्चोद्दिश्य विहितः स देवादित्थानप्राप्तिहेतुरपि सन् ईश्वरार्पणबुद्ध्यनुष्ठीयमानः सत्त्वशुद्धये भवति फलाभिसन्धिर्वर्जितः । शुद्धसत्त्वस्य च ज्ञाननिष्ठायोग्यताप्राप्तिद्वारेण ज्ञानोत्पत्तिहेतुत्वेन च निःश्रेयसहेतुत्वमपि प्रतिपद्यते । तथा चेममेवार्थमभिसन्धाय कस्यचित्—‘ब्रह्मण्याधायकर्मणि’, ‘योगिनः कर्म कुर्वन्ति सङ्गं त्यक्त्वात्मशुद्धये’ इति ।” (शाङ्करभाष्य, गीता, भूमिका, ४ पृ. गुजराती प्रिण्टिंग प्रेस सं)

8. “.... पाण्डुतनयमुद्धोत्साहनव्याजेन परमपुरुषार्थलक्षणमोक्षसाधनतया वेदान्तोदितं स्वविषयं ज्ञानकर्मानुद्गीतं भक्तियोगमवतारयामास ।” (रामानुजभाष्य, गीता, भूमिका, ६ पृ., तत्रैव)

9. “सांख्ययोगभक्त्याश्रयब्रह्मविद्योपदेशेन स्वात्मधर्मे निवेशयन् मोक्षयामास ।”
(वल्लभभाष्य, गीता, भूमिका, १६ पृ., तत्रैव)

10. मध्यमे भगवत्तत्त्वयाधात्मावाप्तिसिद्धये ।
ज्ञानकर्मोभिनिर्वर्त्यो भक्तियोगः प्रकीर्तितः ॥
(यामुनमुनिवृत्तार्थसंग्रह, २१ पृ., तत्रैव)

11. स्वधर्मज्ञानवैराग्यसाध्यमक्त्येकगोचरः ।
नारायणः परं ब्रह्म गीताशास्त्रे समीरितः ॥
(१९ पृ., तत्रैव)

Tilak's exposition with predominance of *karman*.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who is commonly known as Lokamānya Tilak, is perhaps the first man to object to the relegation of *karman* to such an inferior stage, and propounds that *karman* is not only an independent method for the attainment of Self-knowledge but the mystery of the *Gītā*, if properly unravelled, will be found to establish *karman* as the chief purport of the *Gītā*. In the beginning of the present century, as early as in June, 1915, the first edition of his '*Gītā-Rahasya*' was published in Marathi language. For this altogether novel idea, unknown not only to the ordinary readers but also to the people with a bias in philosophy, the author had to pluck up courage. Fortunately the first edition was accepted and sold like a hot cake as a result of which the second edition came out within a short span of three months ! It is needless to follow here fully the method adopted by him for the establishment of his proposition but the principal arguments in favour of his doctrine may be discussed so as to strengthen his position with the help of further textual references. At the same time we may muse upon the problem from some other perspectives in a completely dispassionate manner.

CHAPTER—II

Karman as the Purport of the *Gītā*

Gītā begins with action.

There is not even a tinge of doubt that Kṛṣṇa induces Arjuna to perform deeds viz. fierce battle from which he withdraws as a coward or a eunuch although as a *kṣatriya* or a member of the ruling house he should not have desisted from joining the battle. Arjuna suffered from a sort of weakness that is quite unbecoming of a stalwart as Arjuna. We are really astonished to know of the delusion and nervousness of Arjuna although he is confronted with a situation which is really perplexing. Arjuna's courage, gallantry, strength, skill, marksmanship etc. are beyond question. But this giant also loses his balance out of indecision—whether to win the battle by killing his preceptor and near relatives or to refrain from it for fear of incurring sinful acts. The instruction of the *Gītā* ensues from this guidance and direction given by Kṛṣṇa at this critical moment ; in other words, the *Gītā* removes indecision and advises the action to be taken by Arjuna. Thus the motive behind the instructions of the *Gītā* is to incite Arjuna, and similar other persons suffering from perplexity, to action as it should be decided by the wise. The quotations from the text will follow in a subsequent paragraph when some further discussion will be held in details.

Gītā ends with action.

The *Gītā* ends with Arjuna's determination to fight, and he understands later on that he was under a delusion, and that he has been able to get back his

memory owing to the grace of Kṛṣṇa. He further confesses that he has been able to remove his doubts, and he is under the command of Kṛṣṇa. He promises to obey his orders. Since Kṛṣṇa does not object to this admission of Arjuna, he endorses this interpretation offered by Arjuna as the intended sense of the long discussion.

How to determine the purport of Gītā.

For the ascertainment of the purport of an essay, an article or a book scholars have almost unanimously admitted six criteria on the basis of which we also may make an attempt for the determination of the import of the Gītā. Let me quote the śloka where all the six criteria have been enumerated—

उपक्रमोपसंहाराभ्यासोऽपूर्वता फलम् ।
अर्थवादोपपत्तिश्च लिङ्गं तात्पर्यनिर्णये ॥

It means—The ways for the ascertainment of the import are (i) the agreement of the beginning (*upakrama*) and the conclusion (*upasaṁhāra*), (ii) repetition (*abhyāsa*), (iii) novelty (*apūrvatā*), (iv) result (*phala*), (v) praise or censure (*arthavāda*) and (vi) reason (*upapatti*). Of these six ways the most important is the first one, and perhaps for this reason this is placed in the first position. Although the main argument has already been delineated in the two preceding paragraphs, there are still more cogent arguments which cannot be dispensed with.

Three stages of Gītā.

In the SBG there are three stages as (i) the background of the conversation beginning with the query of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and ending with the summing up by Sañjaya, (ii) the direct conversation between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna beginning with the rebukes and reproaches by Kṛṣṇa and ending with the firm determination of Arjuna as regards the battle, and (iii) the advice of Kṛṣṇa from Chapter II to Chapter XVIII.

First stage analysed—beginning and end.

Now we may study the beginning and conclusion of each of these three stages seriatim and try to find out the import. It is obvious that the first stage comprises the entire Gītā as it is handed down to us in its present form consisting of 699 or 700 śloka-s¹². The Gītā begins with the śloka spoken by Dhṛtarāṣṭra—

धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे समवेता युयुत्सवः ।
मामकाः पाण्डवाश्चैव किमकुर्वत सञ्जय ॥

(SBG 1.1)

Here the query of Dhṛtarāṣṭra is as regards the action of the two warring camps. The two sides have arranged their soldiers in columns of platoons with a desire to attain victory. Thus the very first śloka contains various actions. Besides this the name of the battlefield may be taken in its derivative sense too. *Kuru-kṣetra* is a field (*kṣetra*) where you are always asked to do (*kuru*) something. Now we are to concentrate on another word "*dharmakṣetra*". *Dharma* means deeds which are performed as per the injunctions of the Veda or the ancillary literature or the

12. The Gītā is generally known as *Saptaśatī*, i.e. containing 700 verses. Śaṅkarācārya commented upon 699 verses, and perhaps for this reason those 699 verses have been widely accepted. Sometimes 1 more verse is read at the beginning of the thirteenth chapter thereby raising the number to 700. The Gītā Press edition gets this figure by making the two six-quarter verses three (cf. 1.26 & 1.31). Nīlakaṇṭha adopts the same course. He adds one verse of the thirteenth chapter also. Thus in his opinion the total number of verses will be 701. But in the body of the *Mahābhārata* it is clearly stated that the Gītā contains 745 verses, the break-up of the verses spoken by each speaker being Bhagavān—620, Arjuna—57, Sañjaya—67 and Dhṛtarāṣṭra—1, cf.

षट् शतानि सर्विशानि श्लोकानां प्राह केशवः ।
अर्जुनः सप्तपञ्चाशत् सप्तषष्टिं तु सञ्जयः ॥
धृतराष्ट्रः श्लोकमेकं यीताया मानमुच्यते ।

(Mbh 6.43.4-5)

Smṛti. We know that Pūrvamīmāṃsā is called *karma-mīmāṃsā* or *dharma-mīmāṃsā*. From this also it may be held that *dharma* is essentially *karman* although the word *dharma* has a wider meaning too. In this way the beginning or *upakrama* of the SBG in its first stage directly relates to *karman*. In conclusion also there is predominance of *karman*. The last śloka is—

यत्र योगेश्वरः कृष्णो यत्र पार्थो धनुर्धरः ।

तत्र श्रीर्विजयो भूतिर्धुवा नीतिर्मतिर्मम ॥

(SBG 18.78)

If we mean by *yoga* in *yogeshvara* the *karma-yoga*, then the first quarter is definitely in favour of *karman*. But there being other possibilities of *sāṅkhya-yoga*, *bhakti-yoga* etc. we leave aside this portion for the present. The mention of Pārtha, the archer, signifies efficiency in battle. Wealth (*śrī*), victory (*viṣaya*), welfare (*bhūti*) are results of *karman*. *Nīti* means policy or right course of action ; here 'pact' is intended by Madhusūdana who comments— सन्धिरेव विधीयताम् . Sañjaya indirectly hints at the possible victory of the Pāṇḍavas and as his mentor suggests a compromise with the Pāṇḍavas. In this way the śloka propounds action, and perhaps action only.

First stage—beginning and end conjointly.

Now the agreement, rather conjoined literal unity of the beginning and the end is being shown. If we take the first four syllables and the last four, we get धर्मक्षेत्रे मतिर्मम which means—My mind is in *dharma-kṣetra* or in the field of activity. If the first two and the last two syllables are added, we get धर्म मम which means—*Dharma* is mine i.e. activity is mine. If the first and the last syllables are woven together, we have धर्, म or धर्म i.e. action.

Second stage analysed—beginning and end separately and conjointly.

In the second stage of direct conversation between

Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna ¹³ we have the first sloka as—

कुतस्त्वा कश्मलमिदं विषमे समुपस्थितम् ।

अनार्यजुष्टमस्वर्ग्यमकीर्तिकरमर्जुन ॥

(SBG 2.2)

Here Kṛṣṇa first speaks to Arjuna. Before this there is some conversation which is not direct inasmuch as that is narrated by Sañjaya in his own language. Kṛṣṇa chides Arjuna for the awful plight of a brave warrior who has become a victim to an infamous conduct that is resorted to by uncultured people, that is unable to bring about heaven after death and that results in discredit and disrepute. This śloka is out and out in favour of action.

The last śloka of direct conversation is spoken by Arjuna who, as it has been maintained earlier, accepts thoroughly the proposal of embarking upon the arduous task of internecine war. The śloka is—

नष्टो मोहः स्मृतिर्लब्धा त्वत्प्रसादान्मयाच्युत ।

स्थितोऽस्मि गतसन्देहः करिष्ये वचनं तव ॥

(SBG 18.73)

If we tag the beginning and the end in the manner shown above we get कुतस्त्वं which literally means—How yours, why yours or whence yours ? As per context the meaning of the full sentence will be—How, why or whence could this cowardice and unmanliness of yours come ? Definitely this is an inducement to *Karman*.

Third stage analysed—beginning and end.

We may proceed now towards the third stage i.e. Kṛṣṇa's advice, admonition and exhortation. His first words are addressed to Arjuna through the following

13. In fact the conversation between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna started earlier. We get this from the report of Sañjaya in verse I.20-21, I.25, I.28 etc. But the direct conversation, after sorrowful wailing of Arjuna, starts with II.2 and it ends with XVIII.73.

Śloka—

अशोच्यान्वशोचस्त्वं प्रजावादांश्च भाषसे ।
 गतासूनगतासुंश्च नानुशोचन्ति पण्डिताः ॥
 (SBG 2.11)

Here Bhagavān rebukes Arjuna for lamenting over things or persons for which he should not mourn. He further says that without being properly conversant with the worldly training he is resorting to tall talks like wise men but he forgets that conscientious persons never mourn for those who have departed or still alive but destined to die. The entire śloka denounce inaction, high-sounding hollowed words and enervating talks of grief and sorrow. Kṛṣṇa inspires Arjuna with zealous action that may bring about real happiness and fulfilment of life's ideals.

Kṛṣṇa's last advice to Arjuna, and consequently to the world of human beings is—

सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज ।
 अहं त्वां सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥
 (SBG 18.66)

It may be translated as—Leaving aside all your actions and duties (prompted by your impulses and desires) you should submit to me alone i.e. you should perform all your duties by surrendering the results to me. If you can do this and can refrain from entangling yourself with the result of the deeds performed, know it for certain that I shall make you freed from all sins and bondages. Do not lament. Thus the beginning and the end of the *Gītā* establish the necessity of *karman*.

Here also the first and the last three syllables may be joined as अशोच्यान् मा शुचः i.e. do not lament for things or persons not deserving lamentations. There is nothing for which we may lament and while away our time. Mourning means weakness which a strong man always avoids.

Concluding word of Bhagavān—its significance.

As regards the conclusion (*upasaṃhāra*) of the *Gītā* one more point may be brought to the notice of the scholars. Bhagavān asks Arjuna whether he had been able to understand the purport of the entire conversation and also whether the infatuation is removed or not. Bhagavān utters the last word of this discourse as धनञ्जय . The relevant śloka is—

कच्चिदेतच्छ्रुतं पार्थ त्वयैकाग्रेण चेतसा ।
 कच्चिदज्ञानसम्मोहः प्रनष्टस्ते धनञ्जय ॥
 (SBG 18.72)

Although *dhanañjaya* is a proper name, it may be understood in its derivative sense too. It means—Win the treasure. This treasure may be worldly or spiritual but for the sake of winning it one must be active. Grief, sorrow or inaction cannot bestow this result ; it requires, on the contrary, vigour, valour and virility. It may be recalled that *jaya* or victory is the last word uttered by Kṛṣṇa and this concept of victory being the last word indicates its supreme importance.

The name *Jaya*—relation between *dharma* and *jaya*.

We all know that the *Gītā* is a part and parcel of the *Mahābhārata* which has another appellation as *jaya*¹⁴. The *Mahābhārata* war signifies the victory of *dharma* over *adharma*. Gāndhārī does not swerve from her path of *dharma*, and on all the eighteen days of the war she sticks to her principle of *dharma* and does not budge an inch even when her eldest son seeks blessings of mother every morning for victory. Her unwavering voice comes out as—यतो धर्मस्ततो जयः¹⁵. This concept-cum-

14. जयो नामेतिहासोऽयं श्रोतव्यो मोक्षमिच्छता । (Mbh 18.5.51)

15. Vyāsa says to Gāndhārī—
 उक्तास्यष्टादशाहानि पुत्रेण जयमिच्छता ।
 शिवमाशंस मे मातर्युध्यमानस्य शत्रुभिः ॥

expression haunts with some principal characters of the *Mahābhārata* and appears seven times—Droṇa says this to Duryodhana, Arjuna says this to Yudhiṣṭhira, Kṛṣṇa says to Gāndhārī, Gāndhārī says to Kṛṣṇa, Vyāsa says twice to Gāndhārī and even Dhṛtarāṣṭra says this to Vidura¹⁶. This expression is highly significant because it is negatively also true i.e. यतः अधर्मः ततः अजयः meaning 'Wherever there is *adharma*, there is opposite to victory or defeat'. This expression becomes formally same by *sandhi*, the only difference being of लुप्त अकार in two places but that too for writing device only. In pronunciation यतोऽधर्मस्ततोऽजयः is equal to यतो धर्मस्ततो जयः .

Significance of the number 18.

The frequent occurrence¹⁷ of the number eighteen in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Gītā* is not at all a mere coincidence but this figure is utilised by Vyāsa with the definite purpose of signifying the meaning viz. victory (जय) . The word जय has two consonants—ज् and य् . For making these two sounds intelligible one should start,

सा तथा याच्यमाना त्वं काले काले जयैषिणा ।
उक्तवत्यसि गान्धारि यतो धर्मस्ततो जयः ॥

(Mbh 11.14.12)

and अधर्मं जहि धर्मज्ञे यतो धर्मस्ततो जयः ॥ (Mbh 11.14.12)

This expression reflects the central theme of the *Mahābhārata* and thus this is uttered by many. Dhṛtarāṣṭra says this to Vidura (5.39.9), Droṇa says to Duryodhana (5.148.16), Arjuna says to Yudhiṣṭhira (6.21.11), Kṛṣṇa says to Gāndhārī (9.63.60) and Gāndhārī laments in the presence of Kṛṣṇa before the dead body of Duryodhana (11.17.6).

16. For locations please see the preceding foot note.

17. The number 18 is inseparably connected with our religion and culture. The number prescribed for *japa* is 18 or by infixing one or two zeroes 108 or 1008. Purāṇa-s are 18, so also are Upapurāṇa-s. The *Mahābhārata* has 18 *Parvan*-s, the battle continues for 18 days, there are 18 *akṣauhīni*-s of soldiers, the chapters of the *Gītā* are 18 etc.

as per Sanskrit rules of transferring letters or words into figures, or figures into letters or words, from the left¹⁸. य् is the first letter of अन्तःस्थवर्ण-s ; so by य् we get the figure 1. Again ज् is the eighth letter of स्पर्शवर्ण-s ; thus by ज् we get the figure 8. Now the two figures being juxtaposed make the figure 18. Thus 18 means जय . Victory is the result of planned action and efficient activity. Hence जय, the last word that Kṛṣṇa utters in the *Gītā*, also presupposes action or *karman*.

Repetition—the second means of knowing the purport.

Of the six ways of knowing the import of a book we have so far discussed only the first and foremost means viz. the unity of the beginning and the end. The second means is *abhyāsa* or repetition. The essentiality of performing the deeds is repeated most frequently. Sometimes this repetition refers to the action in general, and sometimes to the particular relevant action viz. the war against the Kauravas. In the consecutive eight ślokas of the second chapter from śloka 31 to 39 *Bhagavān* inspires Arjuna for engaging himself in the battle which is essential under the present circumstances. The relevant lines are—उत्तिष्ठ कौन्तेय युद्धाय कृतनिश्चयः (2.37), युद्धाय युज्यस्व नैवं पापमवाप्स्यसि (2.38) etc. Elsewhere also *Bhagavān* asks Arjuna to be engaged in the battle ; some of those lines are being quoted here—तस्मात् सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युध्य च (8.7), जित्वा शत्रून् भुङ्क्ष्व राज्यं समृद्धम् (11.33), युध्यस्व जेतासि रणे सपत्नान् (11.34), यदहङ्कारमाश्रित्य न योत्स्य इति मन्यसे । मिथ्यैव व्यवसायस्ते (18.59), युध्यस्व विगतज्वरः (3.30) etc.

The repetition as to deeds in general are more frequent. Some prominent lines are quoted below—मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि (2.47), योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि (2.48), नियतं कुरु कर्म त्वम् (3.8), कार्यं कर्म समाचर (3.19), कुरु कर्मैव तस्मात्त्वम् (4.15), योगिनः कर्म कुर्यात् (5.11), कर्म कर्तुमिहार्हसि (16.24), तस्मादोमित्युदाहृत्य यज्ञदानतपःक्रियाः प्रवर्तन्ते (17.24), यज्ञदानतपःकर्म न त्याज्यं कार्यमेव तत्

18. अष्टवर्ण्य नामा गतिः

(18.5), एतान्यपि तु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा फलानि च । कर्तव्यानि (18.6) न हि देहभृता शक्यं त्यक्तुं कर्मण्यशेषतः (18.11), स्वे स्वे कर्मण्यभिरतः संसिद्धिं लभते नरः (18.45), स्वभावनियतं कर्म कुर्वन्नाप्नोति किल्बिषम् (18.47), सहजं कर्म कौन्तेय सदोषमपि न त्यजेत् (18.48) etc.

Novelty—the third means.

The next means viz. *apūrvatā* or novelty may now be taken up. In our *śāstra*-s there are various injunctions which a person is expected to obey. There are some occasions when just the opposite courses appear to be appropriate, and a sincere person following the injunctions are at a loss to understand which particular course he should resort to. Here the *Gītā* prescribes that under such circumstances of quandary a person may perform his duty without any attachment. An action which in normal situations performed with attachment produces merit (*punya*) or demerit (*pāpa*) will, however, generate neither merit nor demerit only if the performer can do it without any affection or aversion. In most of the cases we are prone to shirk our duties simply because the particular duty does not suit to our taste or liking, and similarly as regards some other duties we feel over-enthusiasm in doing them for our selfish gains and for that lose our mental balance. The *Gītā* has this unique teaching of performing the duties without any likes or dislikes, favour or frown, pleasure or pain, agreeability or disagreeability under the context of a seriously perplexing situation. The Upaniṣads teach the theory of doing our duty in a manner that the results do not cling to the performer¹⁹ but the details of such mannerism are not so vividly worked out before a really non-plussed person as Arjuna. The sagacity of performing a person's tasks in critical situations is known as *karma-yoga*, and here lies the novelty of the *Gītā*. By this criterion of novelty or

19. कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि जिजीविषेच्छतं समा ।
एवं त्वयि नान्यथेतोऽस्ति न कर्म लिप्यते नरे ॥
(ईशोपनिषद्, २)

explanation of an unknown concept in an unprecedented manner also we may decide *karman* or *karma-yoga* as the purport of the *Gītā*.

Result—the fourth means

Then comes the fourth means viz. *phala* or result. Whatever is determined as the purport of a book is noticed as having some good result (*phala*). A man who is able to give up all desires enjoys peace, but the peace and tranquillity are not possible to be achieved by a person fostering desires. cf. कामा यं प्रविशन्ति सर्वे स शान्तिमाप्नोति न कामकामी (2.70). Exactly similar idea is conveyed in the next *śloka*—

विहाय कामान् यः सर्वान् पुमांश्चरति निःस्पृहः ।

निर्ममो निरहङ्कारः स शान्तिमधिगच्छति ॥

(SBG 2.71)

We come to know further that a person following the path of *karman* divested of attachment obtains the best result of attaining the Supreme Self. cf.

तस्मादसक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचर ।

असक्तो ह्याचरन्कर्म परमाप्नोति पूरुषः ॥

(SBG 3.19)

In support of this contention it is further said that persons like Janaka could win success by following the path of *karman*. Persons shunning all desire may not perform deeds for their own sake but they should go on performing deeds for the learning of ordinary people who have not been able to reach that exalted standard.

कर्मणैव हि संसिद्धिमास्थिता जनकादयः ।

लोकसंग्रहमेवापि सम्पश्यन् कर्तुमर्हसि ॥

(SBG 3.20)

Release or *mokṣa* is the ultimate aim of a spiritual aspirant. A person submitting the result of *karman* to God may perform deeds without any fear or anxiety of meeting any evil effect. Only faithful observance of the deeds dedicated to God does bring about release from

karman. Bhagavān says—

ये मे मतमिदं नित्यमनुतिष्ठन्ति मानवाः ।
श्रद्धावन्तोऽनसूयन्तो मुच्यन्ते तेऽपि कर्मभिः ॥

(SBG 3.31)

The results of non-attached *karman* being thus favourable it is further established that *karman* or *karma-yoga* is the purport of the *Gītā*.

Arthavāda—the fifth means.

The fifth way of understanding the purport of a work is technically known as *arthavāda*. It is a typical *Mīmāṃsā* concept which means—A statement (*vāda*) that strengthens or supports an injunction or a desired effect (*artha*) by way of praise or denouncement (*stuti-nindā*). Two examples of daily life will be helpful for understanding this concept. A boy of 5 years refuses to drink a cup of milk in spite of the mother's repeated requests on the plea that there is an ant in the milk. In fact it is a particle of tea-dust which the mother cannot take out since the spoon is dirty. Then she says that anybody who eats an ant can learn easily how to swim. Now the boy does not demur to drink the cup of milk for this supporting statement or *arthavāda*. Here mother's intention of drinking of milk by the child is fulfilled by the eulogizing statement (*arthavāda*). In a small kitchen-cum-dining room a girl of 7 or 8 years eats by spreading one of her legs and causes annoyance of her mother. In spite of several entreaties she refuses to withdraw her leg. Now as soon as the mother says that as a result of eating with a spread out leg a girl is married far away, the girl removes her leg with utmost haste lest she misses the opportunity to meet her mother frequently after her marriage. Anybody can understand that distant marriage can in no way be deemed a consequent to eating with spread out leg. But this denunciation establishes in the present case the injunction that none should eat with a spread out leg. Here in the *Gītā* the observance of *karmayoga* is praised

(*stuti*) and abstinence from it is denounced (*nindā*) in various ways. *Karma-yoga* is worth adopting because it is praised that the activities of such a follower of *Karma-yoga* are emulated by people in general. Not only that, the deeds performed by such a person is accepted by all as valid and justified.

यद् यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः ।
स यत् प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते ॥

(SBG 3.21)

A *Karma-yogin* should perform non-chalantly all his deeds with a purpose to teach others the way to remain indifferent in moments of trouble and delight.

सक्ताः कर्मण्यविद्वांसो यथा कुर्वन्ति भारत ।
कुर्याद्विद्वांस्तथाऽसक्तश्चिकीर्षुर्लोकसंग्रहम् ॥

(SBG 3.25)

In the eighteenth chapter Bhagavān asks Arjuna to undertake *Karma-yoga* but if there be the least unwillingness to follow the said advice, the adverse result of destruction is inevitable, and the adherence will produce good results of crossing over all troubles which are normally insurmountable. Here the injunction is followed by the praise of its adherence and depreciation of its transgression. The *śloka*-s are quoted—

चेतसा सर्वकर्माणि मयि सन्यस्य मत्परः ।
बुद्धियोगमुपाश्रित्य मच्चित्तः सततं भव ॥
मच्चित्तः सर्वदुर्गाणि मत्प्रसादात्तरिष्यसि ।
अथ चेत्त्वमहङ्कारात्त श्रोष्यसि विनङ्क्ष्यसि ॥

(SBG 18.57-58)

Thus by the fifth means of knowing the purport we may propound that *karman* is the objective of the *Gītā*.

Reason—the sixth means.

There is still one more means by which we determine the import of a work, and that is *upapatti* or

reason. The author of a book advances arguments in favour of his proposition. He may cite many instances, raise subsidiary issues but he writes and discusses these with a view to substantiating his chief objective. Thus all reasons are advanced for establishing the import. Here in the *Gītā* also we find reasons being adduced to show the prime position of *karman*. In so many places Kṛṣṇa says 'for that reason' (तस्मात्) in addition to the reasons advanced, just to make his reasons prominent and emphasized. Kṛṣṇa says that since Self is eternal, there is no reason for fear of and repulsion from the war owing to the anticipated grief for the death of the revered preceptor and elderly relatives.

अथक्तोऽयमचिन्त्योऽयमविकार्योऽयमुच्यते ।
तस्मादेवं विदित्वैनं नानुशोचितुमर्हसि ॥

(SBG 2.25)

Again he shows reasons that death being inevitable it is improper for Arjuna to come to grief. Hence fight for a just cause is an essentiality.

जातस्य हि ध्रुवो मृत्युर्ध्रुवं जन्म मृतस्य च ।
तस्मादपरिहार्येऽर्थे न त्वं शोचितुमर्हसि ॥

(SBG 2.27)

Bhagavān tries to induce Arjuna to *karman* with various arguments as—Arjuna should not do something that may tarnish his name and fame ; he should not be eager for the result but should perform his duties without any attachment ; he should have no repercussion for success or failure ; he should behave as an efficient worker who is never perturbed by the result ; Arjuna should not remain under the adverse influence of infatuation but he should attain calm and composure etc. In each case Bhagavān advances reasons, some of which are quoted from the text—तस्मात् सर्वाणि भूतानि न त्वं शोचितुमर्हसि (2.30), सुखिनः क्षत्रियाः पार्थ लभन्ते युद्धमीदृशम् (2.32), भयाद् रणादुपरतं मंस्यन्ते त्वां महारथाः (2.35), तस्माद् उत्तिष्ठ कौन्तेय युद्धाय कृतनिश्चयः (2.37), ततो युद्धाय युज्यस्व नैवं पापमवाप्स्यसि (2.38), तदर्थं कर्म कौन्तेय मुक्तसङ्गः समाचर (3.9), निराशीर्निर्ममो भूत्वा युध्यस्व विगतज्वरः (3.30), कुरु

कर्मव तस्मात् त्वम् (4.15) etc. There are several other similar lines where reasons for the necessity of action are put forward. In some such arguments there are the pointed words as तस्मात् , ततः, तदर्थम् etc. and hence in the above citations such words have been underlined.

By resorting to the accredited method of ascertaining the import of a book it is shown that *karman*, rather *karma-yoga*, is the import of the *Gītā*. Now the terms *karman* and *karma-yoga* are to be explained.

Chapter—III

Karmayoga

Various types of deeds

Karman or deeds are of various types. They are prompted by various desires and sentiments. We perform so many deeds for satisfying our physical needs, sensuous pleasure, mental happiness and intellectual purposes. These are natural passionate deeds (*rāgaprāpta karman*). Of such deeds some are neither prescribed nor forbidden (*avihitāpratiṣiddha*). Some others are forbidden for their apparent good results, although in the long run for larger interests these are proved to be pernicious. Such deeds are to be forsaken as per the dictates of the *śāstra*-s. There are some deeds which are enjoined by the *śāstra*-s for the benefit and welfare of the individual, family, society and the entire world, as the case may be. Some of these deeds are prescribed as compulsory duties (*nitya karman*) which a man cannot avoid since by non-compliance of such deeds a sin occurs. The other class of prescribed deeds attracts people for their lucrative results which are generally unseen (*adrṣṭa*). Persons desiring the merit or *punya* undertake such deeds. Again deeds performed with meditation (*upāsanā*) are also of exalted result viz. attainment of the region of gods (*devaloka*). Only prescribed deeds, without being assisted by meditation, bring about for the performer a position in the region of the forefathers (*pitṛloka*). These covetable results being essentially temporary fail to attract a sensible man. Hence it is enjoined that excepting the natural physical deeds required for the maintenance of life all the human activities must be

performed without any attachment ; otherwise the results will accrue and put the performer into the trouble of going into the cycle of birth and death. Here lies the *yoga*, the expertise of performing the deeds which a man should do either reflexly or compulsorily or for teaching the people.

Need for non-attachment.

We have by this time moved fast in the philosophy of non-attached deeds. Some words are to be explained and some concepts require to be elaborated further. The fundamental question is—Why should a person be freed from attachment ? Attachment or desire for results makes a man over-conscious about it. If the result be not agreeable, the performer becomes seriously disturbed, his inspiration for work is lost although he cannot refrain from work, at least the essential duties, and thus the future action starts with a doubt, pessimism and mental infirmity. Such a half-hearted move begets a second grade result. If, on the other hand, the result be agreeable, it is all right for the time being but in the next moment comes down the pain because the result is only temporary. Sometimes the enjoyment caused by the success makes a man over-confident, arrogant and an impatient hanker for fresh success. This situation often makes the next success difficult. Performance of an act with a desire will entail such repercussions which only rarely can a person get rid of.

Meaning of Yoga.

Thus the beginning, or the motive behind a work, should be desirelessness, and the effect, when achieved, should make us neither elated nor dispirited. This balance or equilibrium of mind is known as *yoga*. So says Bhagavān by explaining the term in the *Gītā*—

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय ।
सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥

(SBG 2-48)

The feeling of equality (*samatva*) between success and failure is known as *yoga*. Kṛṣṇa asks to remain in *yoga* by performing deeds after shunning all attachment. A person endowed with this equanimity leaves aside both merits (*sukṛta*) and demerits (*duṣkṛta*). Kṛṣṇa thus again advises Arjuna to attain *yoga* because the best skill of resorting to *karman* is to attain *Yoga*. The śloka is—

बुद्धियुक्तो जहातीह उभे सुकृतदुष्कृते ।
तस्माद् योगाय युज्यस्व योगः कर्मसु कौशलम् ॥
(SBG 2.50)

It is this meaning of the word *yoga* by the acceptance of which all the eighteen chapters of the *Gītā* may be called one *yoga* or the other. *Jñāna-yoga* means efficient knowledge, *Sannyāsa-yoga* means efficient renunciation, etc²⁰. The first chapter viz. "The Depression of Arjuna" is held as a *yoga* because this sorrow and depression of Arjuna do not end there but they culminate in the attainment of knowledge (*Sāṅkhya*). Here lies the mystery or efficiency of the grief and dejection of Arjuna. So this chapter is called "*Arjuna-viṣāda*" *yoga*.

Mention of equanimity in many verses.

However, mental equilibrium or *samatva* has been a key word of the *Gītā*, and the whole work is replete with this concept. There is more than a score of śloka-s where this concept is expressly mentioned²¹. Sometimes in one śloka it is referred to four or five

20. By only, *Yoga* i.e. not being prefixed or suffixed by any other word it often means *karmayoga*, sometimes *jñānayoga* and in some other places *dhyānayoga*. *Yoga* = *karmayoga* in 4.1-3, 4.38, 4.41, 5.6 etc. *Yoga* = *jñānayoga* in 4.41, 6.32, 6.37, 10.7 etc. *Yoga* = *dhyānayoga* in 6.10, 6.19, 8.28, 12.14 etc. The meaning is to be ascertained as per context.

21. The concept of *Samatva* is clear in 2.15, 2.56, 2.57, 4.20, 5.3, 5.18, 5.19, 5.20, 5.23, 6.7, 6.8, 6.9, 6.32, 12.13, 12.15, 12.17, 12.18, 12.19, 13.27, 13.28, 14.24, 14.25, 15.5 and 18.54.

times²². If mention by implication is taken into consideration, we shall be able to find out about fifty such cases.

Relation between desire and happiness/unhappiness.

Desire should be put to minimum because one desire causes another desire, and for non-fulfilment of that desire we are subjected to further dissatisfaction or pain. Some of the western scholars with kindred ideas and feelings have tried to bring home the sad plight of a person having innumerable desires²³. The futility of hankering after happiness by a person with a series of desires is to a great extent established with the help of a fraction²⁴ as—

$$\frac{\text{enjoyment of happiness}}{\text{desire for happiness}}$$

It means that the desires for happiness being far more than the enjoyment of happiness, the happiness of the person concerned will be much less ; on the contrary, if the desire for happiness be more or less equal to the enjoyment of happiness, the person concerned is fairly happy.

22. 12.18 and 14.24.

23. "All willing arises from want, therefore from deficiency, and therefore from suffering. The satisfaction of a wish ends it ; yet for one wish that is satisfied there remain at least ten which are denied. Further, the desire lasts long, the demands are infinite; the satisfaction is short and scantily measured out. But even the final satisfaction is itself only apparent; every satisfied wish at once makes room for a new one; both are illusions.... So long as our consciousness is filled by our will, so long as we are given up to the throng of desires with their constant hopes and fears, so long as we are the subject of willing, we can never have lasting happiness nor peace." (Schopenhauer Arthur, *The World as Will and Idea*, Vol. I, P.253-54, Translated from the German by Haldane and Kemp, 1957).

24. Tilak B. G., *Gītā Rahasya*, p.144.

The above fraction may be expressed in an amended form, and put in the shape of an equation—

$$\text{happiness} = \frac{\text{Satisfaction of desires}}{\text{desires}}$$

Our total enjoyment may roughly be divided into two sections—happiness and unhappiness. So barring a small percentage of cases of delusion we enjoy either happiness or unhappiness. Thus the fraction of unhappiness will be total enjoyment minus happiness. Now the equation of unhappiness will be—

$$1 \text{ (total enjoyment)} - \text{happiness} = \text{unhappiness.}$$

We have become a bit formal, and now illustrations will be very helpful for our understanding. If a man fosters one hundred desires and can satisfy only fifty of them, his quantum of happiness will be 50/100 i.e. 1/2. Necessarily the quantum of unhappiness will also be 1/2. When a person increases his desires, he is hardly able to fulfil the additional desires. There is always a gap between the number of desires and the number of those satisfied. With the increase of desires, there is necessarily the widened gap between desires and their satisfaction. We may put it mathematically as—

$$\text{happiness} = \frac{\text{satisfaction of desires}}{\text{desires}}$$

$$= \frac{50 + 25}{100 + 150} = \frac{75}{250}$$

i.e. 3/10 = happiness. Therefore, 7/10 = unhappiness. But earlier happiness was 1/2 and unhappiness 1/2.

The desires being further increased the fraction will tilt more towards unhappiness. It may be illustrated as—

$$\text{happiness} = \frac{\text{satisfaction of desires}}{\text{desires}} = \frac{75 + 100}{250 + 500} = \frac{175}{750}$$

i.e. 7/30 = happiness.

as opposed to 23/30 = unhappiness

An objection.

It may appear that the equation is so framed as to

suit our convenience of propounding our proposition because whereas the number of desires is increased from 250 to 750 by an addition of 500, the number of the satisfied desires is increased only by 100. This discordant note may sound nice at first but a penetrating study of the problem will bear out the veracity of our proposition.

A reply to above.

It is everybody's experience that each and every enjoyment causes a taxation on our senses. The first or second enjoyment may not make us feel this owing to the pleasure derived from it. But a continued utilisation of any of the senses including the mind makes that particular organ tired and exhausted as a result of which the enjoyer elects to refrain from the said enjoyment at least for a short gap with a view to gaining fresh energy and strength required for the enjoyment. The Upaniṣads and all the śāstra-s stress upon this point although we mostly tend to miss this glaring influence of enjoyments. Naciketas wanted to know the nature of Self (ātman) from Yama who, however, was unwilling to teach this most difficult subject to a boy as Naciketas. Hence the boy was put to temptations viz. a vast tract of land, progeny, gold, elephants, horses, cattle, beautiful damsels, chariots, servants etc. To this Naciketas replied that all these enjoyments would remain for a short period, and during the period of their stay they would take away the vigour and lustre of the senses.

श्वोभावा मर्त्यस्य यदन्तकैतत् सर्वेन्द्रियाणां जरयन्ति तेजः ।

अपि सर्व जीवितमल्पमेव तवैव बाहास्तव नृत्यगीते ॥

(Kāṭha U. I. I. 26)

In the Mahābhārata we see that Yayāti exchanges his old age with the youth of his son Pūru, enjoys the world and comes to a sort of compunction. He exclaims that as fire cannot be quieted by oblation of ghee but it only

blazes up, so also enjoyment is unable to calm down the desires but becomes an instrument for enhancement.

न जातु कामः कामानामुपभोगेन शाम्यति ।
हविषा कृष्णवर्त्मव भूय एवाभिवर्धते ॥

(Mbh 1.85.12)

For fulfilling a man's desire the entire food grains, gold, cattle and ladies of the earth are not sufficient. So a man should give up desires. A man lacking in judgment cannot shun the desire. It is a sort of disease which puts an end to our life but itself does not wane. Happiness can be obtained only by giving up desire.

यत् पृथिव्यां व्रीहियवं हिरण्यं पशवः स्त्रियः ।
एकस्यापि न पर्याप्तं तस्मात् तृष्णां परित्यजेत् ॥
या दुस्त्यजा दुर्मतिभिर्या न जीर्यति जीर्यतः ।
योऽसौ प्राणान्तिको रोगस्तां तृष्णां त्यजतः सुखम् ॥

(Mbh 1.85.13-14)

This is said in the *Gītā* too. When the mind is controlled and is fixed upon Self, when mind is free from all desires, then only such a person is called a *yogin*.

यदा विनियतं चित्तमात्मन्येवावतिष्ठते ।
निःस्पृहः सर्वकामेभ्यो युक्त इत्युच्यते तदा ॥

(SBG 6.18)

This self-controlled *yogin* attains peace, supreme bliss of remaining in Bhagavān who exclaims—

युञ्जन्नेवं सदात्मानं योगी नियतमानसः ।
शान्तिं निर्वाणपरमां मत्संस्थामधिगच्छति ॥

(SBG 6.15)

We have just now seen the philosophical approach to the problem on the basis of some well-known *śāstra*s. This may be discussed more concretely with the help of our daily experience. The satisfaction of one desire causes several other desires as—

- (i) desire for further enjoyment of the object that could give pleasure
- (ii) desire for more strength necessary for the subsequent enjoyment
- (iii) desire for favourable temporal condition for the subsequent enjoyment because a particular enjoyment requires a particular moment
- (iv) desire for favourable spatial condition for the subsequent enjoyment because a particular space is suitable for enjoyment
- (v) desire for replenishment of consumer goods²⁵.

Thus one satisfied desire generates at least five such desires bringing thereby the number of desires to five times. Desires can never be fully satisfied, these will ever remain unfulfilled (*duṣpūra*). cf. "कामरूपेण कौन्तेय दुष्पूरेणानलेन च" (*Gītā* 3.39). Desires are often compared to fire, and literally also they have one similarity of 'not being satisfied'—न अल > अनल . Fire is never satisfied and it never thinks the oblations as sufficient. Desire is also not satisfied and there is no feeling of sufficiency i.e. 'Enough has been cherished, and no more'²⁶.

Desires increased and happiness reduced.

Coming back to our earlier equation we may now show that the share of happiness will go down further.

$$\text{happiness} = \frac{\text{satisfaction of desires}}{\text{desires}} = \frac{50}{100}$$

Now this equation comes to : happiness = $\frac{\text{Satisfaction of early 50 desires}}{\text{Unsatisfied 50} + (\text{Satisfied 50} \times 5)} = \frac{50}{300} = 1/6$ as opposed to $5/6 = \text{unhappiness}$.

25. Satisfaction of one desire entails several pains which may be enumerated as

- (i) Pain for non-continuance of the enjoyment,
- (ii) Pain for physical exhaustion,
- (iii) Pain for adverse temporal condition,
- (iv) Pain for adverse spatial condition, and
- (v) pain for exhaustion of consumer goods.

26. "न विद्यते अलं पर्याप्तिर्यस्येत्यनलो वह्निः ।" (मधुसूदन, गीता ३/३९)

If with utmost efforts about 25 more desires are satisfied, the numerator of the fraction viz. satisfaction of desires is increased to 75, and necessarily the denominator (viz. desires) is increased by $25 \times 5 = 125$. Thus the equation is again changed as follows with the addition of 100 fresh desires—

$$\text{happiness} = \frac{\text{Satisfaction of desires}}{\text{desires}} = \frac{50 + 25}{\text{fresh } 100 + 25 \times 5 + \text{unsatisfied } 250} = \frac{75}{475} = \frac{3}{19} \text{ as opposed to } \frac{16}{19} = \text{unhappiness.}$$

Without going further with this equation we may observe the various stages of happiness which is fast dwindling with the inverse ratio between desires and satisfaction of desires. If the desires increase, the satisfaction decreases ; similarly if the desires decrease, the satisfaction increases. So far we have seen five stages as—

happiness = (i) $1/2$, (ii) $3/10$, (iii) $7/30$, (iv) $1/6$ and (v) $3/19$.

unhappiness = (i) $1/2$, (ii) $7/10$, (iii) $23/30$, (iv) $5/6$ and (v) $16/19$.

The attainment of total happiness by a person having desires thus culminates in *ignis fatuus*. This is sure to happen because the desires increase in geometrical progression, and the satisfaction, in arithmetical progression.

Comforts versus happiness.

In our experience also it is corroborated that persons having more creature comforts and luxuries are less happy. In western countries people enjoy more pleasure through satisfaction of various needs ; various methods are invented for having the best enjoyment but *alas, happiness recedes !* People are really at a loss to understand how peace, tranquillity and bliss can be achieved. People of under-developed countries or *developing countries* look at those people of developed countries with the hope and belief that those persons of

developed countries must be: happy since they are not to struggle for the bare necessities of life. Now it is an open secret that the citizens of rich countries suffer from various distress, strain, pain and malady, many of which are in most cases incurable. Their addiction to alcohol and various drugs poses a serious problem for those countries. Sleeping pills are very common there. In our country too people of affluent families are found to be victims to these evil practices which appear like curses of wealth.

Subsequent enjoyments are less pleasing.

So far as we have analysed, happiness retreats to a distance. Thus the first enjoyment and satisfaction of desires are always less troublesome because then the wants and desires are less at that stage. Let us take concrete examples of everyday life. Suppose you have a new telephone connection in your house. The first moments are definitely pleasing. But we may think about the chain reactions. You are to attend the telephone call even at dead of night, sometimes for nothing. It was a phantom call, a wrong number. The night's sleep is disturbed. Sometimes it happens that somebody of your neighbourhood is stranded elsewhere, and you are to go to that house for transmitting the information. The telephone is out of order but your relatives and friends expect a telephone call from you. You are to go to somebody else's house or to a public call office where also you are not sure to get the proper connection. Application for repair, payment of fees regularly, although it remains out of order for months together, etc. are some of the items of the long list of troubles.

Another instance may be cited. A telephone may not be an essentiality for many but a house to live in is a must for all. To purchase a piece of land, to have information about the land as regards its title, to have it registered on payment of the reasonable price, to have sanction of cement, to get the plan of the house

sanctioned, to contact the labour, to make regular payment etc., then after the house is constructed, the maintenance, tax-assessment, objection, watersupply etc.—this is a long-drawn process from which a person can perhaps never dissociate himself. In Bengali there is a proverb which means—In order to draw breath we go out of breath. (प्राण राखते प्राणान्त)

Swamiji's observations on happiness.

I am here tempted to quote some lines from Swami Vivekananda's "Jñāna-yoga". He explains this phenomenon of happiness in his inimitable language. "The man who lives in a forest, who does not know how to cultivate the mind, cannot read a book, has not heard of such a thing as writing. If he is severely wounded, he is soon all right again ; while we die if we get a scratch... The animal man lives in the senses. If he does not get enough to eat, he is miserable. In the senses both his misery and his happiness begin and end. As soon as this man progresses, as soon as his horizon of happiness increases, his horizon of unhappiness increases proportionately". (The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. II, P. 96) Swamiji elaborates further as—"As we increase our power to be happy, we also increase our power to suffer, and sometimes I am inclined to think that if we increase our power to become happy in arithmetical progression, we shall increase, on the other hand, our power to become miserable in geometrical progression." (ibid., P. 97). Here Swamiji says that he is 'inclined to think' in the manner said above, but the present author of this monograph has humbly tried to establish this to some extent with reasons and mathematical figures.

A popular story.

That our wants and desires make us more and more unhappy is propounded nicely through one popular story. There was a sage who had only two small coverings for his privy parts (*kaupina*). When he would

remain outside his cottage for begging alms, a mouse used to eat up a portion of it. Being thus disturbed for days together the sage reared a kitten. For this kitten he had to procure milk. Now he reared a cow. the cow needed fodder and the excess milk required to be sold. The cow should be kept under a shed which required to be cleansed. Calves were born, a servant was engaged. Some adjacent land was tilled, a pucca house was built, a pond was dug, and in this way the sage was gradually so awfully busy in his multifarious activities that he found no time for meditation. The preceptor of this sage was astonished to see all these worldly objects. Being accosted by the preceptor the sage said—'Only for the small covering of the privy parts'. (*kaupin kā wāste*). Such astounding results are often achieved if we are not very careful, but run like a deer after a mirage.

The contention of the learned people is that the more are the paraphernalia, the more is the trouble. Śaṅkarācārya writes five excellent *śloka*-s with the refrain '*kaupinavantah khalu bhāgyavantah*' which means—Persons having the kaupina only are fortunate. Two of the *śloka*-s may be quoted here—

मूलं तरोः केवलमाश्रयन्तः पाणिद्वयं भोक्तुममन्त्रयन्तः ।
कन्धामिव श्रीमपि कुत्सयन्तः कौपीनवन्तः खलु भाग्यवन्तः ॥
स्वानन्दभावे परितुष्टिमन्तः सुशान्तसर्वेन्द्रियवृत्तिमन्तः ।
अहर्निशं ब्रह्मसुखे रमन्तः कौपीनवन्तः खलु भाग्यवन्तः ॥

(कौपीनपञ्चक २, ३)

The *śloka*-s mean—Fortunate are those who take the refuge at the foot a tree, who use the two hands as the bowl for food, who speak ill of wealth as a tattered sewn cloth, who are satisfied with the bliss in themselves, who have made their mental states calm and quiet, who are always happy with the feeling of *Brahman* and who have nothing but the *kaupina*.

An incident in Lālābābu's life.

A nice incident of about 200 years ago may now be

referred to. Kṛṣṇacandra Singh, popularly known as Lālābābu, was one day returning to his office in the evening after his supervision of zamindari work. He heard the daughter of a washerman saying loudly to her father, "Oh dad, time passes on, put fire to the dry banana leaves". In the western side of Bengal dry banana-leaves are called *vāsanā*. In Sanskrit *vāsanā* is a well-known word which means 'subtle desire'. Expressed desire is *kāmanā* and unexpressed subtle desire is *vāsanā*. However, on hearing the words of the daughter said to her father Lālābābu thought that in his life also time was passing on uselessly since till then he was unable to know *Īśvara*, and that he had failed to put fire to i.e. to destroy *vāsanā* or desires. These words of the washerman's daughter wrought wonders in Lālābābu's mind; he gave up all his desires for knowing the Supreme Lord (*Paramēśvara*).

Happiness in first satisfaction.

As I have said earlier (P 31) the first satisfaction gives maximum pleasure, and this has such a maddening impression that the enjoyer runs after the same enjoyment; of course, in our discussion I leave out the painful enjoyments from which persons automatically, may be involuntarily, shudder back. To make the second, third or subsequent satisfactions more pleasing people make so many attempts, add sauce but the result is almost always disheartening. When the satisfaction comes to the minimum, people generally develop a sort of aversion and quietism provided they have a judicious sensibility and discernment. This happens generally in advanced age, and some modern thinkers explain this by assigning the reason of senility. Our opinion is: yes, there is no doubt that in most cases senility is there but senility itself cannot produce the result. The real reason is that senility creates more pains and minimises the enjoyment. One who has the maturity of understanding can comprehend the vainness of the sense-pleasures. It

is pity that some experienced elderly people also go on extending the sphere of desires knowing it, in many cases, for certain that those desires are not going to be fulfilled ever in their lifetime. If in this way pain and sufferings are inevitable, should we submit to them? Or, we may find out a device for getting rid of them.

To give up attachment for result.

The method of avoiding pleasure and pain growing out of sense-object contact or through a mental faculty is to give up the attachment for result. It is easy to advise a person to remain disentangled from all sorts of actions or their results; but a man who endeavours to do so knows the difficulty especially in view of the irresistible attraction for the result being prompted by which the man engages his body and mind in that particular task.

How to be freed from attachment.

३४८ (५)

Bhagavān prescribes two ways of attaining the exalted stage of unattached deeds. The first and best means is to know that under the influence of ignorance or *māyā* the self-conscious *ātman* remains veiled; there appears the ego that *ātman* or *jīva*, i.e. the individual, preforms deeds. In fact *ātman* or self is bereft of all actions. The actions that we perceive in an individual are really present in the three *guṇa*-s viz. *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. But owing to the veil of ignorance the man is befooled, and considers himself as the performer of the task.

प्रकृतेः क्रियमाणानि गुणैः कर्माणि सर्वशः ।

अहङ्कारविमूढात्मा कर्ताहमिति मन्यते ॥

(SBG 3.27)

The same idea has been expressed in almost similar language in the thirteenth chapter also as—

प्रकृत्यैव च कर्माणि क्रियमाणानि सर्वशः ।

यः पश्यति तथात्मानमकर्तारं स पश्यति ॥

(SBG 13.29)

One who knows the real nature of the *guṇa*-s and their functions properly understands that our so-called actions are not really ours but they belong to the *guṇa*-s. Sensible persons understand that the senses are being attracted towards their objects viz. colour, taste etc. which are manifestations of *guṇa*-s. Many actions are enumerated in details in SBG as—

नैव किञ्चित् करोमीति युक्तो मन्येत तत्त्ववित् ।
पश्यन् शृण्वन् स्पृशन् जिघ्रन् ज्ञानं गच्छन् स्वपन् श्वसन् ॥
प्रलपन् विसृजन् गृह्णन् निषिञ्चन् निषिञ्चन् ॥
इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेषु वर्तन्त इति धारयन् ॥

(SBG 5.8-9)

Self or *ātman* has no action, and by the grasp of this reality these wise persons are able to remain non-attached or dissociated from all sorts of actions and their results.

तत्त्ववित्तु महाबाहो गुणकर्मविभागयोः ।
गुणा गुणेषु वर्तन्त इति मत्वा न सज्जते ॥

(SBG 3.28)

This is the secret of remaining unattached. But the majority is of a different mettle, and they remain under the overwhelming influence of ignorance. It is very difficult to make them aware even of their ignorance, not to speak of their escape from such a state. It will be sheer wastage of time and energy to make them understand the reality because of the fact that there are chances of further misunderstanding. They may stop all actions unjustifiably and pretend to be the knowers of reality. Since it is needless to run the risk of being confronted with such a sorry state of affairs, Kṛṣṇa advises that such a person may not be disturbed.

प्रकृतेर्गुणसम्पृढा सज्जन्ते गुणकर्मसु ।
तान्कृत्स्नविदो मन्दान् कृत्स्नविन्न विचालयेत् ॥

(SBG 3.29)

Second method of practising unattached deeds.

For such persons the second alternative is prescribed, and that is to submit all actions or the results of all actions to *Īśvara*. He has to do this with a discerning mind as an obedient servant of the Great Lord. He should give up all desires (*nirāśīḥ*) and sense of mineness (*nirmamaḥ*). In the present context of battle to be fought by Arjuna he should also give up grief because in a battle death by killing becomes essential. Some scholars think that the word *nirmamaḥ* also refers to the present context only i. e. in a battle the warrior is necessarily cruel (*nirmamaḥ*). The relevant śloka is of deep significance, and before discussing it further it may be cited—

मयि सर्वाणि कर्माणि संन्यस्याद्यात्मचेतसा ।

निराशीर्निर्ममो भूत्वा युध्यस्व विगतज्वरः ॥

(SBG 3.30)

This śloka may be understood for universal application in all sorts of tasks, and also in the present context of the imminent fierce battle. The word *vigatajvaraḥ* is applicable in the present context only; the word *nirmamaḥ* is, in all probability, applicable universally, especially because it precedes the word 'fight' (*yudhyasva*). Grief comes after fight, hence *vigatajvaraḥ* follows the word *yudhyasva*. For universal application of this śloka the word *yudhyasva* should be understood in a generalised sense i.e. struggle for existence (*jivana-yuddha*) or any task. There are four stages for performing a task successfully as shown below—

- (i) to have a discerning intellect i.e. the power to differentiate between self and non-self (This meaning is obtained from the word *adhyātmacetasā*).
- (ii) to submit all actions to the Supreme Self (*Parameśvara*)
- (iii) to give up all desires (*nirāśīḥ*), and
- (iv) to shun the sense of mineness (*nirmamaḥ*)

Justifiability of two methods examined.

It is often posed that a particular thing is realised in a particular manner. We know colour with the help of eyes, and there is no second method. Similarly the sound is heard by the ear only but by no other medium. Similarly *Paramēśvara* is to be known in a particular method viz. *Sāṅkhya-yoga*. Strangely enough we find here that two methods are accepted. If *Sāṅkhya-yoga* or the path of knowledge cannot be adopted by the ordinary people, the next course of *karma-yoga* is easily adoptable by a serious person. The nature of the people, and the consequent power of understanding, make this difference. Everything in this universe is within *Brahman*; there is nothing which is beyond *Brahman*. 'The creation of the universe is my nature, and the dissolution also is so'. Bhagavān has expressed this in many ways—

अहं कृत्स्नस्य जगतः प्रभवः प्रलयस्तथा ॥

मत्तः परतरं नान्यत् किञ्चिदस्ति धनंजय ।

मयि सर्वाणि प्रोक्तं सूत्रे मणिगणा इव ॥

(SBG 7.6-7)

It means—'I am the beginning and the dissolution of the universe. Oh Dhañanjaya, there is nothing which is different from me. All that is here (universe) is sewn in me as the series of gems in a thread.' It is also said that Bhagavān holds this entire universe pervading it with a part of His existence.

विष्टभ्याहमिदं कृत्स्नमेकांशेन स्थितो जगत् ।

(SBG 10.42)

Chapter—IV**Karman, Māyā and Sublimation of Karman****Two prakṛti-s of Bhagavān—higher & lower**

The entire horizon of our experience and the entire existence are nothing but His manifestations of two *Prakṛti-s* viz. *Aparā* and *Parā*. The eightfold manifestation of the Supreme Existence in the form of non-self is *Aparā Prakṛti*. These eight manifestations are—earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intellect and ego-sense. The other i.e. *Parā Prakṛti* is consciousness which holds this universe²⁷. In spite of the opposition of Self and non-Self i.e. *Parā* and *Aparā* it is to be noted that Bhagavān accepts both as His *Prakṛti*.

Role of Māyā.

People bound by the non-self i.e. *Aparā Prakṛti* are not at all beyond *Brahman* or Bhagavān. They are very much of the same nature as of the Supreme Entity, the only difference being the bondage on them that of these non-self entities. These persons fail to know that they are in Him owing to the veil of *Māyā* which is under the governance of the Supreme Entity. It is Bhagavān alone who can dissipate the veil of *Māyā* from those who have taken the refuge of Bhagavān and have fully submitted to Him. *Māyā* is the balanced or equilibrious state of the three *guṇa-s* viz *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. *Sattva* signifies

27. भूमिर्वायोऽनलो वायुः स्रग् मनो बुद्धिरेव च ।

अहङ्कार इतीयं मे भिन्ना प्रकृतिरष्टधा ॥

अपरेयमितस्त्वन्यां प्रकृतिं विद्धि मे पराम् ।

जीवभूतां महाबाहो ययेदं धार्यते जगत् ॥

(SBG 7.4-5)

light, knowledge, happiness etc., *rajas* means attachment, desire, action etc., and *tamas* brings in ignorance, infatuation, inattention, laziness, drowsiness etc. In the predominance of one of these three there appear various results. Sometimes two become prominent and necessarily the results are varied for the change in the degree of prominence or subordination. The two śloka-s about *Māyā* are quoted from the *Gītā*—

त्रिमिर्गुणमयैर्भावैरेभिः सर्वमिदं जगत् ।

मोहितं नाभिजानाति मामेभ्यः परमव्ययम् ॥

दैवी ह्येषा गुणमयी मम माया दुरत्यया ।

मामेव ये प्रपद्यन्ते मायामेतां तरन्ति ते ॥

(SBG 7.13 & 14)

We may translate as—Veiled by these three modes of existence constituted by the three *guṇa*-s the entire world fails to recognize Me who am above them and imperishable. This divine *Māyā* of Mine can be overcome with difficulty. Persons taking Me as the refuge can cross it.

Bhagavān in both animate and inanimate beings.

People who are able to grasp the *Parā Prakṛti* are blessed, and they are saved from this painful existence of this world. But persons of lower order failing to understand the *Parā Prakṛti* are not at all deserted by Him since they are within the all-pervading existence of Bhagavān. Persons of lower order are to remain confident of His grace and should, in all their activities, think of Him ; all the actions are to be centred round Him ; all results, good or bad, agreeable or disagreeable, are to be submitted to Him. Remembrance and refuge of Bhagavān are the only saviour of men remaining veiled by *Māyā*. Such persons are thus entitled to reach the stage attainable by the knowledge of *Parā Prakṛti*.

Difference lies in the power of understanding.

All human actions are aimed at the attainment of

peace and happiness. Happiness won through the satisfaction of desires is not permanent, and thus a sensible man may derive happiness by knowing Bhagavān, the perennial source of happiness. If happiness be the nature of Bhagavān, where lies the inconsistency in accepting His existence in these material and transitory happiness ? To this it may be urged that all happiness is His nature but owing to the lower state of the locus where it finds expression the feeling differs, and the satisfaction is minimum. Let us take an example. If we see a man suffering from ailments, the feeling of unhappiness grows in us, and we desire the ailments and sufferings be over soon and the man be again happy. The same feelings may appear in us by seeing the theatrical performance or the moving pictures of cinema or television. Again the static pictures may produce similar feelings. Further, the narration of facts, read through a letter or heard from a friend, also creates similar feelings. It is no denying the fact that the impression through perception is deepest and the man perceived is the source of unhappiness as the case may be. This original situation is in these cases transmitted in various ways and the feelings appear through these transmissions. Bhagavān in His *Parā Prakṛti* is realised by the fortunate few but the common men being under the cover of *Māyā* only grasp His nature in a distorted form, and think that they are correct in their estimate. Then we forget that the earth which is His manifestation is also conscious because nothing is beyond Him. We argue that the earth, water, fire etc. are unconscious elements and accordingly different from Bhagavān. This is our folly. Our essential nature or *svabhāva* is Pure Consciousness but owing to adverse influence of *Māyā* and especially of the *tamas* we suffer from a serious consequence as a steep fall from the real nature. By our endeavour we may gradually progress and rise to the level of the predominance of *rajas*, then to that of *sattva*. We are to cross further and go beyond all these limitations since the much lauded

sattva also is in the domain of *Prakṛti*. A few lines from Sri Aurobindo's 'Essays on the Gītā' are quoted—

"Undoubtedly sin has to be abandoned if one is to get anywhere near the Godhead ; but so too has virtue to be overpassed if we are to enter into the Divine Being. The *sattwic* nature has to be attained, but it has then to be exceeded. Ethical action is only a means of purification by which we can rise towards the divine nature, but that nature itself is lifted beyond the dualities,—and indeed there could otherwise be no pure divine presence or divine strength in the strong man who is subjected to the *rajasic* passions." (P. 244, first printing). I like to quote some lines regarding the lower and the higher nature so excellently exposed by the saint Sri Aurobindo—"The practical distinction between this original power of essential quality and the phenomenal derivations of the lower nature, between the thing itself in its purity and the thing in its lower appearances, is indicated very clearly at the close of the series... It is then upon the basis of these statements that we have to view the transition of things from the higher to the lower and again from the lower back to the higher nature." (P. 243-44). However, people aware of the veil of ignorance keep them aloof from it and show capability of understanding themselves as dissociated from all tasks. Others fall prey to ignorance and go on beating about the bush till the time when good sense prevails and take refuge of Bhagavān. In this way the problem posed before us is solved.

Unattached deeds are extolled.

It has already been dwelt upon more than once that deeds performed with a desire for result entangle persons, and such people have no escape from the enjoyment of the result, good or bad. It is also true and expounded too that the same actions, if done without any attachment, or in other words, without the desire for result will fail to bind the performer by their ordinarily inescapable strings. It is our universal

experience that a mind pestered with agitation, trouble, fear, despair or delight can grasp an object with much difficulty and sometimes wrongly too. When you are in hurry and in urgent need of opening your almirah, you forget where you kept the key, and even holding the key in your fist you may search frantically for the key. The naughty child cannot be properly trained to obedience since the father beats the child out of his excessive wrath. He was not impelled by a sense of duty but was prompted by an unbridled anger. The tragedy in our life is that we work for name, fame and other gains. 'Work for work's sake' should be our watchword. Here I quote Swami Vivekananda from his *Karma-yoga*—"Love, truth, and unselfishness are not merely moral figures of speech, but they form our highest ideal, because in them lies such a manifestation of power. In the first place, a man who can work for five days, or even for five minutes, without any selfish motive whatever, without thinking of future, of heaven, of punishment, or anything of the kind, has in him the capacity to become a powerful moral giant." (Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. I, P. 32-33). After a paragraph he says—"The ideal man is he who, in the midst of the greatest silence and solitude, finds the intensest activity, and in the midst of the intensest activity finds the silence and solitude of the desert²⁸. He has learnt the secret of restraint, he has controlled himself". (ibid., P. 34)

How can one work have two opposite results ?

As it has been said, a work done with an attitude of mind as the desire for result will produce pain and unhappiness in the long run whereas the same work done with another attitude of mind as absence of desire

28. We find here an echo of the verse of the *Gītā*—

या निशा सर्वभूतानां तस्यां जागर्ति संयमी ।
यस्यां जाग्रति भूतानि सा निशा पश्यतो मुनेः ॥

(SBG 2.69)

for result will lead a man towards eternal bliss, or in other words, fulfilment of life's ideals²⁹. To this an objection is raised on the following grounds. Fire has the property to burn, and it will burn your hand with whatever attitude of mind you may touch it. Poison kills a man with whatever attitude a man may swallow it. To this it may be urged that our statement relates mainly to human sentiment. I cannot think of burning my father's body, it is a shuddering thought but at the time of cremation of my father I do it as my duty, and any hindrance in this process is undersirable. I cannot think of burning my leg but I condescend to burn it when it is done as an antiseptic measure against dogbite. A person avoids poison with utmost care but in a different attitude of mind i.e. being-overpowered by enemies prefers poison and feels happy in doing so. Happiness is the aim of life. Pure and endless happiness being beyond our reach in our troubled and misguided life we stoop to the temporary happiness. Without knowing the key to real happiness we mostly resort to the elusive easy compendium and vainly try to make such fake happiness ever-lasting. Without changing our attitude of mind, without giving up the desire for result i.e. attachment we cannot dream of real happiness. Thus attitude of mind is one of the most important factors for attaining a man's ideals of life.

Contemplation changes the attitude.

It has already been said that the attitude of work as prescribed in the *Gītā* is to do without any desire, and for the attainment of that stage one should submit the fruit of work to Bhagavān.

ब्रह्मण्याधाय कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा करोति यः ।
लियते न स पापेन पशुपत्रमिवाभ्रसा ॥
(SBG 5.10)

29. cf. कर्मजं बुद्धियुक्ता हि फलं त्यक्त्वा मनीषिणः ।
जन्मकर्मविनिर्मुक्ताः परं यच्छन्त्यनामयम् ॥
(SBG 2.51)

As water on a lotus-leaf never clings to it, so no sin clings to the man who submits all actions to *Brahman*, and performs his task without any attachment. Although the deeds are performed by me, I should think that this is being done by Him through my agency.

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति ।
भ्रामयन् सर्वभूतानि यन्त्रारूढानि मायया ॥
(SBG 18.61)

This state of mind can be achieved through prolonged practice of contemplation, and gradually this attitude of mind is to be extended in every field of life.

Results of contemplation in our daily life.

Contemplation (*bhāvanā*) changes the attitude of work, if practised regularly and sincerely. What was earlier my own personal deed is now changed by *bhāvanā* into a sanctified one ; mind and intellect remain totally freed from all blemishes and impurities. The performer of the deeds enjoys composure and sublimity. This attitude of mind is then reflected in our daily duties. We pray to God in the morning that we are only doing all our tasks for His pleasure.

लोकेश चैतन्यमयाधिदेव श्रीकान्त विष्णो भवदाज्ञयैव ।
प्रातः समुत्थाय तव प्रियार्थं संसारयात्रामनुवर्तयिष्ये ॥

We also pray that without taking into consideration the subtleties of *dharma* and *adharma* we are determined to follow the dictates of Hṛṣīkeśa who resides in us.

जानामि धर्मं न च मे प्रवृत्ति-
र्जानाम्यधर्मं न च मे निवृत्तिः ।
त्वया हृषीकेश हृदि स्थितेन
यथा नियुक्तोऽस्मि तथा करोमि ॥

(प्रपन्नगीता ५७)

Similar is our prayer to the Mother of the world. Beginning from morning to evening, and also beginning

from evening to the next morning all our deeds be done for the purpose of the worship of the Mother. The significance is that our deeds should be so planned and performed, and those motivations should be so pure and sacred as may be utilised as the worship of the Mother.

प्रातः प्रभृति सायाहनं सायाहनात् प्रातरन्तरम् ।
यत् करोमि जगन्मातस्तदस्तु तव पूजनम् ॥

Sublimation of ordinary and sacrificial tasks.

Ordinary people, especially the domestic ones, are to perform some essential duties before the completion of which they cannot normally retire. They cannot generally get rid of such duties till death. If these people are not given proper training and guidance necessary for such special circumstances, they will perhaps have no other alternative but to succumb to the misfortune which is almost sure to befall them from time to time. The traditional advice of the learned teachers in such cases is to impose a sublime attitude to everything and thereby to sanctify the ordinary duties. This idea of sublimation is flagrantly available in the Upaniṣads. The *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* begins with the *aśvamedha* sacrifice—but not with its ritualistic details. The Upaniṣad is in the *jñānakāṇḍa* of the Veda, and accordingly the rituals are not relevant there. People with lower state of mental discipline may remain engrossed in rituals only but people endowed with higher mental attainments are instructed in the niceties of knowledge through the sacrificial procedure as the *aśvamedha* sacrifice. This Upaniṣad teaches here that the horse of a horse-sacrifice should be thought to be the entire universe including time and space. The Upaniṣad further teaches that a person not being able to perform this sacrifice owing to his ineligibility (*anadhikāra*) or incapacity (*aśamarthyā*) is asked to think his own body as the horse, and the process of

contemplation should be applicable on his own body in the manner it is prescribed to be done on the horse³⁰.

At the end of this Upaniṣad also this process of contemplation is enjoined for a domestic person who must undergo sexual intercourse with his married wife as a part of his religious duty. The householder should think this task as the *Vājapeya* sacrifice and by thinking so he gains the result of the sacrifice too³¹. The *Chāndogyopaniṣad* teaches that to eat or to fill one's belly is a sheer animal instinct but a discerning man should sublimate this by *bhāvanā* or meditation of this act as the *agnihotra-homa* offered to the *Āhavanīya*-fire. Here appetite or the digesting fire is contemplated as the sacred *Āhavanīya*-fire, the act of eating is sublimated as the sacred offering of the *homa*-ceremony³².

Sublimation of every task.

A very nice *śloka* recited by Śaṅkarācārya in praise of Śiva may most profitably be discussed with a view to showing a devotee's desire to be able to perform all sorts of daily duties in relation to the worship of Śiva.

30. Śaṅkara is very terse in explaining the Upaniṣadic text 'Uṣā vā aśvasya medhyasya śīraḥ' (Br. U. 1. 1. 1.) and writes—'काललोकदेवतात्वाधारोपणं च प्रजापतित्वकरणं पशोः'. Here Ānandgiri comments—'यथा प्रतिमायां विष्णुत्वकरणं तददृष्टिः, तथा कालादिदृष्टिरश्वावयवेषु तस्य प्रजापतित्वकरणम् । अश्वमेधाधिकारी हि सत्यश्वे कर्मणो वीर्यवृत्तरत्नार्थं कालादिदृष्टीरश्वावयवेषु कुर्यात्, तदनधिकारी त्वश्वाभावे स्वात्मानमश्वं कल्पयित्वा स्वशिरःप्रभृतिषु कालादिदृष्टिकरणेन प्रजापतित्वं सम्पाद्य प्रजापतिरस्मीति ज्ञानात्तदभावं प्रतिपद्येतेति भावः ।' (तत्रैव)

31. 'तस्या वेदिरूपस्थो लोमानि वर्हिश्चर्माधिवशे समिद्धो मध्यतस्तौ मुष्कौ, स यावान् ह वै वाजपेयेन यजमानस्य लोको भवति तावानस्य लोको भवति य एवं विद्वान् ।' (बृ. उ. ६/४/३). Here Śaṅkara comments—'वाजपेययाजिनो यावान् लोकः प्रसिद्धस्तावान् विदुषो मेधुनकर्मणः लोकः फलमिति स्तूयते ।' (तत्रैव)

32. 'तद् यद् भक्तं प्रथममागच्छेत्तद्वोमीयं स यां प्रथमामाहुतिं जुहुयात्तां जुहुयात् प्राणाय स्वाहेति प्राणस्तुष्यति...' (छा. उ. ५/१९-२३)

This is possible only by contemplation. The śloka is—

आत्मा त्वं गिरिजा मतिः सहचराः प्राणाः शरीरं गृहं
पूजा ते विषयोपभोगरचना निद्रा समाधिस्थितिः ।
सञ्चारस्तु पदोः प्रदक्षिणविधिः स्तोत्राणि सर्वा गिरो
यद्यत् कर्म करोमि तत्तदखिलं शम्भो तवाराधनम् ॥
(परा पूजा १४)

It means-'O Mahādeva, my own self is Yourself, my intellect is Your wife viz. Pārvatī, my senses are Your attendants, my body is Your temple, the accumulation of the objects of enjoyment is Your offering, my sleep is Your meditation, my walking on foot is Your circumambulation, my all words are Your prayers. Whatever I do is a form of Your worship.' It goes without saying that this attitude of mind raises the standard of the man to a great extent towards the goal of realisation.

Mahābhārata on attitude of mind.

In society, administration, state law etc. everywhere the attitude of mind is taken into consideration before the appraisal of the work. To pierce a person's belly with a sharp knife is deemed an attempt for culpable homicide but when a doctor does this for a surgical operation, he is honoured and paid for it. To feed the hungry is a noble task but doing this with an evil intention is definitely denounced. In the *Mahābhārata* Vyāsadeva attaches serious importance to the motive or attitude of a person at the time of performing a particular deed. In his opinion the same action may produce altogether different result if it is done with an evil motive. Penance (*tapas*), study (*adhyayana*), the Vedic injunctions (*vedavidhi*) and accumulation of wealth (*vittāharaṇa*) through hard labour are doubtless good action if they are performed in the normal attitude of a man. These very actions may easily be changed as sources of sin if these are done with an

unholy temperament and bad motive (*bhāvopahata*).

तपो न कल्कोऽध्ययनं न कल्कः
स्वाभाविको वेदविधिर्न कल्कः ।
प्रसह्य वित्ताहरणं न कल्क-
स्तान्येव भावोपहतानि कल्कः ॥

(Mbh 1.1.275)

This śloka occurs at the end of the Anukramanikā Parvan i.e., the gist of the *Mahābhārata*. Here Vyāsa narrates in short the main plot of the *Mahābhārata*, the chief import of the epic, the importance of it, its wide appeal to the people, its extent, the traditional transmission of the stories and happenings, Vyāsa's own assessment about the main characters etc. This particular śloka recording the necessity of good attitude of mind is the last śloka of this chapter, and thus it appears that this śloka serves as a clue to the maladies of a man or a nation when that is at the cross-roads. The same idea has been expressed by Vidura in his advice to the king *Dhṛtarāṣṭra*. Vidura says that in this world of fear (of destruction) there are four measures by which we can attain fearlessness. These are daily offering, occasional offerings, silence and study. But these very items produce adverse results if they are not performed in proper attitude.

चत्वारि कर्माण्यभयङ्कराणि
भयं प्रयच्छन्त्ययथाकृतानि ।
मानाग्निहोत्रमुत मानमौनं
मानेनाधीतमुत मानयज्ञः ॥

(Mbh 5.33.77)³³

A person feeling conceit for his offerings, daily or occasional, loses the best result of these tasks. By this habit of giving food to the gods the man understands the necessity of feeding men and animals. A person

33. With a bit change of the order of the words the same verse is repeated in Mbh 5.35.45.

having self-respect cannot accept food from a conceited man even when he is hungry. He would prefer fast to disrespect. Silence (*mauna*) is necessary for practising restraint of body, mind and speech. But to publicise this or to brand this as an act of his religiousness is wholly unjust because it degrades the man. Sincere study improves the standard of a man but when a man boasts of his study or cannot reflect the ideals of the scriptures in his life, his study is not only meaningless but it is dangerous too because other people will lose respect for study itself.

Chapter—V

Meaning of *Yajña*, and Performance of Duty

Work for sacrifice or *Yajña*

In the preceding paragraph there has been a reference to offerings—*homa* and *yajña*. The best way of performing deeds is to submit all results to Bhagavān. It must not be forgotten that Bhagavān is everywhere. His existence is more manifest in living beings than in the non-living. Thus it becomes our duty to serve the living beings, at least the humanity. Unless we understand this, our religious and spiritual thoughts are practically of no use. Bhagavān teaches in the third chapter of the *Gītā* that deeds performed for a purpose other than sacrifice cannot save a man from the catastrophe of the eternal cycle of birth and death ; on the contrary, they bind the performer. He asks Arjuna to work for sacrifice and also to do that without any attachment.

यज्ञार्थात् कर्मणोऽन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः ।

तदर्थं कर्म कौन्तेय भुक्तसङ्गः समाचर ॥

(SBG 3.9)

Meaning of *yajña*.

Almost all the traditional scholars have taken the *yajña* to mean *Viṣṇu* or *Paramēśvara*. Thus any work done for the sake of *Paramēśvara* i.e. submitting results of deeds to Him is ideal, and hence the performer will never suffer from any disagreeable consequence especially the movement from one birth to another and other intermediate sufferings of death, disgrace etc. That we cannot remain satisfied with only submission to Bhagavān is clear from the subsequent *śloka*-s where

other duties also are prescribed. Submission to Bhagavān does not mean inaction, and there is no doubt about it. But the duties which have been prescribed may be understood by the single word *Yajña*. What I like to impress upon is that the word *yajña* may be understood in a wider sense which will, in no way, go against the derivative meaning too. The word *yajña* is derived by the Paninian rule "*Yajayāca*" etc. (3.3.90) which means that the suffix *nañ* is added to the root *yaj* etc. in the voice of verb (*bhāvavācya*) and any other voice other than the active voice. Here the accusative voice (*karmavācya*) is necessary for the meaning wanted by the commentators. The meaning of the word will thus be 'the deity that is worshipped' because the root *yaj* means 'worship of a deity'. The meaning suggested by this humble, self is the same i.e. 'the deity that is worshipped' but the import differs. Commentators mean by this word 'the Supreme Deity that is worshipped' but my suggestion is that we may take two meanings at a time—(i) The Supreme Deity that is worshipped, and (ii) any other deity that is worshipped. We may recollect that in the next two *śloka*-s it is said that the creator created the beings and asked them to have their objects through *yajña* or sacrifice. Both the deities and the men should have full co-operation and by that both would thrive. In the next *śloka* (3.12) it is further said that the deities, if satisfied by the offerings in sacrifice, would give many attractive gifts ; but if men fail to offer to the deities their legitimate share, such men are to be known as thieves.

इष्टान् भोगान् हि वो देवा दास्यन्ते यज्ञभाविताः ।

तैर्दत्तान् प्रदायैभ्यो यो भुङ्क्ते स्तेन एव सः ॥

(SBG 3.12)

The next verse is a more explicit statement of Bhagavān inasmuch as He informs us that a person taking the residue of sacrificial oblation for his own consumption is absolved of all sins. Bhagavān warns us

that persons cooking for their own consumption only eat sins i.e. food stained with sins.

यज्ञशिष्टाशिनः सन्तो मुच्यन्ते सर्वकिल्बिषैः ।

भुञ्जते ते त्वघं पापा ये पचन्त्यात्मकारणात् ॥

(SBG 3.13)

Meaning of *deva*.

The word *deva* is normally derived from the root *div*, to shine, and thus this word means 'a radiant being'. The deities are called radiant for their prowess and advanced knowledge. Each and every being has some sort of prowess and also some skill in performing its own duty. *Yogin*-s have learnt the process of controlling the breath, and thus the secret of having a long life, from the frogs, serpents, tortoises and such other beings³⁴. Each and every being, even animals, reptiles, insects etc., may be our preceptors in some respects, only if we have the mentality to learn from them. So every living being may be called a '*deva*', and we must be very particular about our oblation or service to be paid to each. Yāska, the author of *Nirukta*, derives the word *deva* from the root *dā*, to give, even³⁵. Thus one who gives something is a *deva*. Parents, preceptors etc. are called *deva*-s, and a student is taught accordingly³⁶.

Offerings to *deva*-s in *navāṇna*, *tarpaṇa* etc.

The weaver serves us by weaving a cloth, the carpenter prepares the doors and windows, the potter makes jars for holding our drinking water, the mason constructs our house, the compositor composes the

34. cf. नाशनन्ति दुर्दुराः शीते फणिनः पवनाशनाः ।
कुर्मश्चैवाङ्गोत्तारो दृष्टान्ता योनिनो मताः ॥

35. "देवो दानाद् वा दीपनाद् वा द्योतनाद् वा द्युस्थानो भवतीति वा" (निरुक्त ७/१५)

36. "वेदमनुच्याचार्योऽन्तेवासिनमनुज्ञास्ति ।... मातृदेवो भव । पितृदेवो भव । आचार्यदेवो भव । अतिथिदेवो भव ।" (तैत्तिरीयोपनिषद् १/११/१-२)

book-matter, the machine-man prints, the binder binds the book, the farmer ploughs the land and produces food-grain etc. All of them are giving their labour, for our service. The service of higher personalities need not be mentioned because everybody understands it easily. All living beings serve us and thus all are to be considered as *deva*-s and they are to be worshipped (*Yajña*). It is in these acceptations of the terms *deva* and *yajña* that the said verses should be interpreted, otherwise neither the *śāstra*-s can be properly explained nor the commentaries can be understood. Right from the *Rgveda* down to the *dharmaśāstra*-s and other literature it has been universally accepted that a human being has to look into the interest of all living beings, a sense of mineness should be developed. This is not only a philosophical and religious doctrine of India but it is practised too, though in a reduced degree owing to the impact of the materialistic doctrines, in the whole of India in their ceremonies and daily habits. At the beginning of the harvest we celebrate the *navāṇṇa* ceremony or the harvest-feast when after offering the new harvest to the deities we also leave a portion for the crows, the cow and other animals and insects. Then only we partake of it. We may also recall the *tarpaṇa*-ceremony in which libations of water are offered to our deceased forefathers. Along with them we have been offering water to all departed souls of the entire universe³⁷. We unhesitatingly say that these offerings may satisfy all—relatives, friends, foes³⁸, known, unknown, of this world or the other worlds, of this continent or other continents. Offering of water is

37. आब्रह्मभुवनल्लोका देवर्षिपितृमानवाः ।
तृप्यन्तु पितरः सर्वे मातृमातामहादयः ॥
अतीतकुलकोटीनां सप्तदीपनिवासिनाम् ।
मया दत्तेन तोयेन तृप्यन्तु भुवनत्रयम् ॥

38. येऽबान्धवा बान्धवा वा येऽन्यजन्मनि बान्धवाः ।
ते तृप्तिमखिलां यान्तु ये चास्मत्तोयकाङ्क्षिणः ॥

meant for pleasing every living beings from the stalk of grass to the Supreme Existence viz. *Brahman*³⁹.

'Give food to others'.—Veda and Upaniṣad.

The attitude of giving a share of our food to the hungry is glaringly expressed in the nine verses of one hymn of the *Rgveda* (10.117.1-9). The hymn advises us how to behave with persons desiring food. Sharing of food with others must be practised for one's own well-being. The contention of the three verses is being reproduced here in short. The third verse means—The real giver is he who gives food to a person desiring food. Offering food in the *yajña*-s makes a man rich and helps him to procure friends. The gist of the fifth verse is—Persons asking for food should be given food. One should remember that days change and the monetary condition also changes. In view of the importance of the sixth verse Madhusūdana Sarasvati quotes it in his commentary of the *Gītā* 3.13. The meaning of the verse is—A person not liking to give food to others gains food uselessly. This attitude brings in his fall and death. He who does not satisfy the deities and friends by his habit of distributing food but eats alone remains with his sin only. The *mantra* may be quoted—

मोषमत्रं विन्दते अप्रचेताः

सत्यं ब्रवीमि वध इत् स तस्य ।

नार्यमणं पुष्यति नो सखायं

केवलाद्यो भवति केवलादी ॥

(*Rgveda* 10.117.6)⁴⁰.

39. आब्रह्मस्तम्भपर्यन्तं जगत्पुष्यतु ।

40. In view of the importance of this hymn I propose to present a running summary of the six other *mantra*-s i.e. RV 10.117.1, 10.117.2, 10.117.4 and 10.117.7-9.
10.117.1—Hunger is death and one who eats but gives food to none moves quickly towards death. One who gives food is saved from extinction, and a person not giving food hardly finds anything or anybody capable of giving him happiness.

All food is for all.

Now-a-days governments of various countries, political parties and socio-political thinkers are engrossed in economic policies, struggle between haves and have-nots etc. They are going on making several experiments as to the best solution of these acute problems. So many theories have been enunciated but the basic human element is not being improved in a planned way. The obligatoriness of our moral duties are not being imbibed in people. The hollow insincere slogans may bring in political dividend but the main task remains unaccomplished owing to the lack of confidence of the general public in those political or so-called sophisticated theoreticians. In the hoary past when peoples of many of the modern developed countries were yet to know what civilization was, it was in India where people could think of distribution of food because all produce was deemed common to all. This concept has further been developed in the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* where it has been said that the food that we eat everyday is apt to be consumed by everybody, and in fact the creator has produced this for

10.117.2—One who does not give food to a person desiring food or to his guest, coming to the house, does not find happiness. A person causing pain by his stiff attitude in not giving food to a beggar and eats in his presence cannot be happy.

10.117.4—One who does not feed his dependents loses them.

10.117.7—One who gives food becomes a friend.

10.117.8—One rich man goes after another richer man who also goes after a still richer man. Thus none should boast of his monetary status; on the contrary, everybody should give money and food to others.

10.117.9—'Let others give'—is not the proper attitude. Remember that the two hands are not equally efficient in doing a particular task, the two cows do not give equal amount of milk, the twins do not have the same valour and people of the same family are not equally charitable. So one who has some food should give a share of it to others.

all (cf Br. U. 1.5.2)⁴¹. The person who toils for the production of the food-grain may have a big share but essentially the produce is owned by everybody. This ancient Vedic tradition is reflected through the *Gītā* in a plain and simple language.

Selfish enjoyment is a sin.

In the *Gītā* Bhagavān has mentioned a cycle which is more or less acceptable excepting in one step viz. rains being produced by *yajña*. Modern science has not yet been able to establish the veracity of this statement. It has not been disproved too. If good will be a force, the sacred and pious deeds of sacrifice being performed with proper perspective of love for all may produce the desired result of required shower in time. However, the cycle that is mentioned in the *Gītā* is as follows—From *Akṣara* or the Unchanging Supreme Self comes out the Veda, from the Veda the rituals are known, through the rituals the *yajña* or sacrifice is performed, from sacrifice the rain is produced, the rain produces food-grain, by foodgrain people are maintained⁴². The eternal cycle which the human beings should try to preserve for their own interest is—Men will perform the sacrifice, and by sacrifice, through rain and foodgrain, men will survive. One who does not follow this eternal cycle, and consumes the entire produce for

41. "इदमेवास्य तत् साधारणमत्र यदिदमद्यते । स य एतदुपास्ते न स पाप्मनो व्यावर्तते मिश्रं हेतुत् ।"

Here Sankara's commentary is most illuminating—"... मिश्रं हेतुत् । सर्वेषां हि स्वं तदप्रविभक्तं यत् प्राणिभिर्भुज्यते, सर्वभोज्यत्वादेव यो मुखे प्रक्षिप्यमाणोऽपि ग्रासः परस्य पीडाकरो दृश्यते, ममेदं स्यादिति हि सर्वेषां तत्राशा प्रतिबद्धा ।"

42.

अन्नाद् भवन्ति भूतानि पर्जन्यादन्नसम्भवः ।
यज्ञाद् भवति पर्जन्यो यज्ञः कर्मसमुद्भवः ॥
कर्म ब्रह्मोद्भवम् विद्धि ब्रह्माक्षरसमुद्भवम् ।
तस्माद् सर्वगतं ब्रह्म नित्यं यज्ञे प्रतिष्ठितम् ॥

(SBG 3.14-15)

satisfying the senses leads his life uselessly as is unbecoming of a human being.

एवं प्रवर्तितं चक्रं नानुवर्तयतीह यः ।

अघायुरिन्द्रियारामो मोघं पार्थ स जीवति ॥

(SBG 3.16)

This narrow selfish enjoyment by satisfying one's own body, senses and mind is denounced by Bhagavān in strong language as *aghāyu* which means 'a person whose life has been an embodiment of sin'. The significance is that such a person may perform meritorious deeds but these cannot change the sinful nature grown through the absence of sacrifice i.e. through non-offering.

Everybody, even Bhagavān, must work.

Enlightened persons have nothing more to achieve because they have already attained the *summum bonum* of their life⁴³. Since all actions are prompted by some desire, they feel no necessity of doing anything but they are self-contented owing to the rending of the veil of that resplendent bliss which is the nature of Self⁴⁴. These persons gain nothing by doing a work nor lose anything by refraining from any work⁴⁵. Not only that, Bhagavān Himself resorts to action just to teach the people that a man is born with some duties and responsibilities. The world cannot be maintained if

43. यं लब्ध्वा चापरं लाभं मन्यते नाधिकं ततः ।
यस्मिन् स्थितो न दुःखेन गुरुणापि विचाल्यते ॥
(SBG 6.22)

44. यस्तत्त्वान्तरितेव स्यादात्मतृप्तश्च मानवः ।
आत्मन्येव च सन्तुष्टस्तस्य कार्यं न विद्यते ॥
(SBG 3.17)

45. नैव तस्य कृतेनार्थो नाकृतेनेह कश्चन ।
न चास्य सर्वभूतेषु कश्चिदर्थव्यपाश्रयः ॥
(SBG 3.18)

work is not done. So in order to inspire people to work Bhagavān Himself has been going on performing deeds. Bhagavān is the best of all beings, and if He does not perform deeds, others will follow suit, and thereby the world will meet destruction. Whatever He will accept as correct and proper will also be accepted by others.

यद् यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः ।

स यत् प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते ॥

(SBG 3.21)

To perform one's own duty is a sacred work.

Everybody should do his own duty howsoever difficult, loathsome or repulsive it may appear. Without doing one's own duty one may perform other tasks quite well, but this is not at all commendable. First thing is to perform one's own duty, and that too with no desire for result i.e. submitting the result to God. By doing this the mind is purified, and the so-called diffidence and weakness disappear. One may think that a particular task is free from all defects and may be adopted without any compunction. But it is not so. Fire is ever pure but it is not free from smoke which is undesirable. Thus without being mentally disturbed by the work that a person has to perform he should go on performing his own duty. The worm that is born in a poison is not killed by that poison. Similarly a person entrusted with the duty of ruling the people i.e. a *Kṣatriya* must not have any repugnance to fight simply because it is stained by the blood of the people, relatives and preceptors. In this way Arjuna is inspired for work, and through these words all human beings are instructed in the necessity of unceasing work that is destined for him either by his birth or by his subsequent association through service, employment or otherwise. Some persons are more interested in others' work, and they often find fault with them, although their own tasks are either unfinished or done in a

haphazard manner. This is strongly denounced by Bhagavān through the following verses—

श्रेयान् स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात् स्वनुष्ठितात् ।
स्वभावनियतं कर्म कुर्वन्नाप्नोति किल्बिषम् ॥
सहजं कर्म कौन्तेय सदोषमपि न त्यजेत् ।
सर्वारम्भा हि दोषेण धूमेनाग्निरिवावृताः ॥

(SBG 18.47, 48)

During the stage of his infatuation Arjuna said that it would be better for him to have his livelihood by begging than to kill his friends, relatives and preceptors. In these two verses, and also in an earlier verse of the third chapter (3.35) it is stressed upon that begging may be an honourable and accepted profession for a recluse but not so for a man born in the royal family, and that too for an unjust cause and in a temperament of cowardice, covered by the illogical arguments.

No profession is mean.

Ordinarily hunting is deemed a worst duty because a hunter kills animals for no fault of their own. Still a person taking up the profession of hunting and selling meat by cutting the animals into pieces may be respected by all if he performs his duties well—in his profession, in his private life, in his family life and in the society. A recluse, who occupies a special position of honour in this ancient land, has to learn even the subtle principles of *dharma* from such a hunter. The *Mahābhārata* narrates such a fact where a hunter-cum-butcher of Mithila could know from the mere presence of a recluse that he had been sent by a lady of similar sincerity and performed her household duty with utmost care. The sage was astonished to see that the hunter was aware of those events which happened earlier with that lady. The sage, who was a brahmin, could learn quite a lot from this hunter. These chapters of the *Mahābhārata* (3.206-14) are some of the most illuminating portions of this epic.

Reaching the highest stage by doing own duty.

The lady who sent the sage to the butcher was able to know the niceties of *dharma* only by remaining strictly sincere in her work of the family. For such persons work is no drudgery, work is love, work is bliss. If a person can go on with his work with a full heart resplendent with joy, he can reach the highest stage as it was in the case of Janaka etc. The *Mahābhārata* shows that it is not a solitary instance of Janaka which can inspire us for work but anybody fully devoted to his work can attain that stage. We may attain success in life through self-less work, through love of work, through love for them whom we come across in course of our work, through love for the instruments which help us by their presence and co-operation and through love for the mannerism of work that we have to follow. This success does not only mean earning of money or name or fame but the accurate and proper functioning of the work also for which it is designed. Such work may not have the charm of people's appreciation, may not come to the notice of anybody but the simple task or a difficult one that is entrusted upon a particular worker must be performed with joy and love. This lady of whom a mention was made just now did not go through the sacred texts but she did her family duty and other duties properly. Prior to coming to that lady the sage could kill a heron by his angry look to the heron who left faeces on the sage. Now he became aware of his extraordinary power acquired through penance. However, the lady asked the sage to wait for alms. In the mean time her husband came tired and hungry, and so she had to attend him. The sage showed his wrath for being neglected for such a long time. To this the lady replied that she being sincere to her duties was not afraid of his angry eyes. She was not a heron and could not be burnt.

नाहं बलाका विप्रर्षे त्यज क्रोधं तपोधन ।

अनया क्रुद्धया दृष्ट्या क्रुद्धः किं मां करिष्यसि ॥

(Mbh 3.205.24)

The sage was astonished to hear of the heron-episode from this lady who was never an eye-witness of this fact which happened in a forest. It is the startling effect of sincere work performed without attachment but with extreme love for work.

Non-attached deeds purify the mind.

A man performing deeds without any attachment is extolled in many ways in the *Gītā*. By doing so the man can have his mind purified because the body, the mind, the intellect and the senses were active not for any particular enjoyment but they went on performing the deeds non-attached.

कायेन मनसा बुद्ध्या केवलैरिन्द्रियैरपि ।

योगिनः कर्म कुर्वन्ति सङ्गं त्यक्त्वात्मशुद्धये ॥

(SBG 5.11)

Purification of mind is a stepping stone for reaching the final goal of release from bondage. Those who lay special stress upon *karman* i.e. unattached deeds think impurity of mind as the main blockade for attaining the cherished goal of Supreme Knowledge. However, whether *karman* be the ultimate means of knowledge, be best-suited for knowing the reality, there is no doubt that a man reaching that supreme stage must not have any desire for worldly belongings. Thus the recluses are paid the highest honour and respect in the society. The mystery of unattached deeds may be understood by the fact that a man remaining within the atmosphere of enjoyment but mentally becoming free from it rises to the same status as owned by a recluse. It is in this sense the householder is at par with the *sannyāsin* provided he (the householder) remains unattached.

Duty of the householder.

The householder is praised in the scriptures in various ways. Manu compares the utility of the

householders for other *āśrama*-s or stages of life with the utility of air for all beings.

यथा वायुं समाश्रित्य वर्तन्ते सर्वजन्तवः ।

तथा गृहस्थमाश्रित्य वर्तन्ते सर्व आश्रमाः ॥

(*Manusmṛiti* 3.77)

Almost the same idea has been expressed in *Vasiṣṭhasmṛiti*. A householder performs the sacrifice, a householder practises penance, and a householder is marked by his speciality of fostering other stages. As all waters flow to the sea, so all beings depend on the householder. The householder is to be considered as the mother of all⁴⁶. The ideal householder is described in the *Mahānirvāṇatantra* where it is said that a householder remains in *Brahman*, knows *Brahman* as the final goal, and does everything by submitting to *Brahman*.

ब्रह्मनिष्ठो गृहस्थः स्याद् ब्रह्मज्ञानपरायणः ।

यद् यत् कर्म प्रकुर्वीत तद् ब्रह्मणि समर्पयेत् ॥

(*Mahānirvāṇatantra* 8.23)

Manu says that the householder occupies the highest position in the four-stage society especially for maintaining the three other stages.

सर्वेषामपि चैतेषां वेदस्मृतिविधानतः ।

गृहस्थ उच्यते श्रेष्ठः स त्रीनेतान् बिभर्ति हि ॥

(*Manusmṛiti* 6.89)⁴⁷.

In the *Mahābhārata* Vyāsa himself observes that the

46. यथा नदीनदाः सर्वे समुद्रे यान्ति संस्थितिम् ॥

यथा मातरमाश्रित्य सर्वे जीवन्ति जन्तवः ।

एवं गृहस्थमाश्रित्य सर्वे जीवन्ति भिक्षवः ॥

(*वसिष्ठस्मृति* ८/१५-१६)

47. Also compare *Vyāsa-smṛiti* 4.2

householder is the mainstay of all others, and thus this *āśrama* is the foremost stage of life.

वयांसि पशवश्चैव भूतानि च जनाधिप ।
गृहस्थैरवधार्यन्ते तस्माच्छ्रेष्ठो गृहाश्रमी ॥
सौम्यं चतुर्णामितेषामाश्रमाणां दुराचरः ।
तं चराद्य विधिं पार्थ दुश्चरं दुर्बलेन्द्रियैः ॥

(Mbh 12.23.5-6)

Each is great in his own place.

Performing one's own duty sincerely and satisfactorily is the point to be considered but not the stage of life (*āśrama*) a man chooses. God's worship is possible in all the stages of life. It is nobody's monopoly. As Swami Vivekananda says—"Each is great in his own place". Before this he says—"If a man retires from the world to worship God, he must not think that those who live in the world and work for the good of the world are not worshipping God; neither must those who live in the world, for wife and children, think that those who give up the world are low and vagabonds." (Complete Works, vol. I, p. 47).

Performance of duty bestows greatness.

In this connexion I may repeat the age-old story retold by Swami Vivekananda. There was a king who used to ask a question of every *Sannyāsin* he met—"Which person is superior—the householder or the *sannyāsin* ?" The answer being in favour of the householder, he demanded proofs. If that *sannyāsin* failed to prove, the king would compel him to lead the life of a householder. If any *sannyāsin* thought his own order of a recluse was superior, the king similarly asked him to prove, failing which the *sannyāsin* had to change himself as a householder. At last a young recluse came whose opinion was—"Both were equally great. Each is great in his own place."

Now came the challenge of proving it. This young

recluse was ready to prove this provided the king would come with him for some days and move about. The king agreed and they reached the kingdom of a king whose daughter was going to be married by the system of self-choice by the bride. The king and the young recluse were mere onlookers of this celebration and stood silently in one corner. Similarly another handsome young recluse reached there and went to the said assembly of kings out of curiosity. The princess rejected all suitors and selected this young recluse. Soon she put the garland over him. But he threw it off and ran away. The princess also followed him. The king and his men began to repeat the terms of marriage that immediately after marriage half of the kingdom would be of the bridegroom, and the rest would be bequeathed to him after the king's death. This chosen beautiful young recluse turned a deaf ear to all these and ran into a forest. So did the princess. The other *sannyāsin* who took the king with him to prove that 'Each is great in his own place', followed them. The beautiful *sannyāsin* could disappear in the jungle. But the princess failed to trace him and was extremely tired. She could not go back too to her father owing to the nightfall. The king and the *sannyāsin* also were compelled to take rest under a tree where the princess also took refuge. On the top of the tree was a bird-family with five members in all—the male bird, the wife and their three children. This bird-family had three guests. But the guests were shivering in winter and suffering from hunger. The Bird brought a stick with fire at one end. Then he brought some dry light branches and made the necessary fire for the guests. But what about human food ? What can this bird-family do for them ? Considering the fact that men eat birds' flesh the bird jumped upon the blazing fire. Thinking that one bird was not sufficient for three men the wife of the bird also plunged into the fire. Following the parents the children also did this. The men, however, could not eat the birds.

The *sannyāsin* now said to the king, 'Each is great

in his own place'. The beautiful *sannyāsin* who could throw away the garland of the princess and also the bride and the kingdom was great as a *sannyāsin*, and the householders who could sacrifice their lives like these birds for the guests were also equally great although their duties differed.

Chapter—VI

Synthesis

Karman is not the only chief import.

Each is great in his own place—is the eternal doctrine which has been accepted in this ancient culture of India. In this connexion I like to mention that the *Bhagavadgītā* is a *Śāstra* which propounds karman as a chief purport. But it is never sought to be established by this humble self that karman is the only chief import of the *Gītā*. As it has been said earlier, the *Gītā* accepts many avenues for the attainment of the Reality. In this way the *Gītā* preaches the doctrine of synthesis. The various Vedāntic systems are apparently contradictory, and perhaps with this understanding the followers of the different systems and sub-systems have arrayed their forceful arguments against one another. But the fact is that the traditional teachers felt the necessity of prescribing different courses for men of different nature and propensities. A person following a particular course will eventually reach the Supreme Entity through other stage or stages or directly. It depends on many things, especially on the capabilities, sincerity, confidence and strength of mind. Contact with an able teacher is also an important factor in this respect.

Various courses leading to realisation.

In order to build one's conviction in a particular course to be adopted it is often shown by the teachers that all the scriptures propound this. Thus the followers of the path of knowledge explain all the

śāstric texts in that particular vein. Similarly the followers of the path of devotion or *karman* or *yoga* explain all the texts accordingly. It is a pity that even scholars of high rank cannot sometimes grasp this essential aspect of our culture and stubbornly go against the other systems which they have not accepted. It is the genius of this culture that it knows to accommodate and assimilate other doctrines, and for this reason this culture has been able to survive all tests and calamities.

Compatibility of courses—knowledge is accepted in *Bhāgavata*.

Student of philosophy have in general been accustomed to think the paths of knowledge and devotion being in sharp opposition, as if any compromise even is beyond consideration. *Śrīmadbhāgavata* or the *Bhāgavata purāṇa* is an accredited text of the followers of devotion. At the end of the work the author does not hesitate to accept the identity of *jīva* and *Brahman*, a concept rejected by the *Bhaktivādin* and professed by the *Jñānavādin*.

सर्ववेदान्तसारं यद् ब्रह्मात्मैकत्वलक्षणम् ।

वस्तुद्वितीयं तन्निष्ठं कैवल्यैकप्रयोजनम् ॥

(*Bhāgavata* 12.13.12)

It is to be noted here that in this *bhaktiśāstra* the identity of *jīva* and *Brahman* is mentioned as the quintessence of all the *Vedāntas*.

Advaitin accepts *vigraha* of *Bhagavān*.

Again Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, an Advaita stalwart, writes in course of his monumental work *Advaitasiddhi* that he knows none else than Kṛṣṇa who is the Ultimate Reality. Here in his pen Madhusūdana does not depict Kṛṣṇa as a formless entity but He is present before him with a figure holding the flute in the hands, looking like the new cloud, wearing a yellow garment, having the lower lip as red as the *bimba*-fruit, having

the face as beautiful as the full moon and the eyes being as extended as the lotus-leaves.

वंशीविभूषितकरात्रवनीरदाभात्

पीताम्बरादरुणबिम्बफलाधरोष्ठात् ।

पूर्णन्दुसुन्दरमुखादरविन्दनेत्रात्

कृष्णात् परं किमपि तत्त्वमहं न जाने ॥

(*Advaitasiddhi*, P. 750, NSP ed.)

This *śloka* is also the first of the five concluding verses of *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* commentary of the *Gītā* by Madhusūdana Sarasvatī.

Madhusūdana desires form and image of *Bhagavān*.

The commentary of the *Gītā* is written by Madhusūdana some time, after the completion of *Advaitasiddhi*⁴⁸. In the exposition of the *Gītā* Madhusūdana has been much more vocal in expressing his love for devotion. After finishing the commentary of the section of devotion (Chapters VII to XII) he has been so much inclined to devotion that at the beginning of the thirteenth chapter he confesses his inability to grasp the Supreme glow of *Brahman* but his mind is eager to know that blue radiance by seeing which his eyes will have the fulfilment of their being. Evidently this blue radiance is none else than Kṛṣṇa who is of blue or dark complexion.

ध्यानाभ्यासवशीकृतेन मनसा तन्निर्गुणं निष्क्रियं

ज्योतिः किञ्चन योगिनो यदि परं पश्यन्ति पश्यन्तु ते ।

अस्माकन्तु तदेव लोचनचमत्काराय भूयाच्चिरं

कालिन्दीपुलिनोदरे किमपि यन्नीलं महो धावति ॥

(*Gūḍhārthadīpikā*, Ch. XIII. 1, beginning)

No opposition between devotion and knowledge

Devotion or *bhakti* is a sentiment which can hardly

48. "विस्तरस्तु अद्वैतसिद्धौ द्रष्टव्यः" (मधुसूदन, गीता, ५/१६)

be denied by any philosophical system. The dispute lies in the position of *bhakti*—whether *bhakti* is the final goal or it is a step towards the finale viz. knowledge (*jñāna*). Those who go deep into the philosophical speculations and have the fortune of realisation find no opposition between these two. Dilettanti often quarrel amongst themselves just to make the confusion worse confounded⁴⁹. Śaṅkarācārya is one of the chief exponents of knowledge, and it is he who has written innumerable devotional lyrics which have perhaps no parallel in Sanskrit literature. Madhusūdana Sarasvatī also felt the need of explaining the concept of *bhakti* in his work *Bhaktirasāyana* where he has gone to the extent of observing *bhakti* as a means worth adopting by each and every person whereas the path of knowledge may be adopted by the fortunate few rising to the high level of being capable of giving up all attachments for terrestrial and celestial enjoyments⁵⁰.

Synthesis of all doctrines.

The preceding paragraphs show that excessive attachment for any particular course or system to the exclusion of and aversion for all other systems goes against the basic principles of Indian culture. A person may follow any course, may worship god, may have some particular desires and objectives for worshipping a particular deity but it is sure that the person virtually worships the Supreme Reality viz. *Bhagavān*. The mental faculty of respect and reverence is made steady by *Bhagavān* and the result is achieved by His grace. So

49. "There is not really so much difference between knowledge (*jñāna*) and love (*bhakti*) as people sometimes imagine. We shall see, as we go on, that in the end they converge and meet at the same point." (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. III, P. 32).

50. "प्राणिमात्रस्य भक्ताधिकारः, ब्रह्मविद्यायान्तु साधनचतुष्टयसम्पन्नस्य परमहंसपरिव्राजकस्याधिकारः ।"
(*भक्तिरसायन*, १९-२० पृ; दुर्गाचरण सं)

all efforts, all forms of worship, all respect and devotion converge in Him.

Bhagavān says—

कामैस्तैस्तैर्हृत्तज्ज्ञानाः प्रपद्यन्तेऽन्यदेवताः ।
तं तं नियममास्थाय प्रकृत्या नियताः स्वया ॥
यो यो यां यां तनुं भक्तः श्रद्धयार्चितुमिच्छति ।
तस्य तस्याचलां श्रद्धां तामेव विदधाम्यहम् ॥
स तथा श्रद्धया युक्तस्तस्या राधनमीहते ।
लभते च ततः कामान् मयैव विहितान् हि तान् ॥

(SBG 7.20-22)

No sort of narrowmindedness or bigotry can have any encouragement in the *Gītā*. You may give any name to the Supreme Reality, you may follow any mode of worship, and it is certain that the Supreme Reality will be satisfied by that; or in other words, you will yourself be benefited by that. The *Bhagavadgītā* or the *smṛti-prasthāna* repeats the Vedic revelational truth as the sage Dīrghatamā Māmateya understood. The *R̥gveda* says—

इन्द्रं मित्रं वरुणमग्निमाहु-
रथो दिव्यः स सुपर्णा गरुत्मान् ।
एकं सद्विप्रा बहुधा वदन्त्य-
ग्निं यगं मातरिश्वानमाहुः ॥

(RV 1.164.46)

The same idea has been expressed by Puṣpadanta in his famous *stotra* written in praise of Śiva—

त्रयी सांख्यं योगः पशुपतिमतं वैष्णवमिति
प्रभिन्ने प्रस्थाने परमिदमदः पथ्यमिति च ।
रुचीनां वैचित्र्याद् ऋजुकुटिलनानापथजुषां
नृणामेको गम्यस्त्वमसि पयसामर्णव इव ॥

(*Śivamahimnaḥstotra*, verse 7)

A similar verse written in praise of Hari may also be relevantly quoted here—

यं शैवाः समुपासते शिव इति ब्रह्मेति वेदान्तिनो
बौद्धा बुद्ध इति प्रमाणपटवः कर्तेति नैयायिकाः ।
अहीनित्यथ जैनशासनरताः कर्मेति मीमांसकाः
सोऽयं वो विदधातु वाञ्छितफलं त्रैलोक्यनाथो हरिः ॥

An almost identical verse comes out from the pen of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī who says that the followers of all the deities become identified with Śiva, the Supreme—

शैवाः सौराश्च गाणेशा वैष्णवाः शक्तिपूजकाः ।
भवन्ति यन्मयाः सर्वे सोऽहमस्मि परः शिवः ॥

(SBG, 2nd Concluding verse of Ch. XV ; *Gūḍhārthadīpikā*)

Index I

Abbreviations

SBG	—	<i>Śrīmadbhagavadgītā</i>
Gītā	—	<i>Śrīmadbhagavadgītā</i>
Mbh	—	<i>Mahābhārata</i> edited by Pañchānan Tarkaratna, Śaka 1830.
बृ. उ.	—	बृहदारण्यकोपनिषद्
छा.उ.	—	छान्दोग्योपनिषद्
उ.	—	उपनिषद्

Index II

Gītā-śloka-s referred to and explained
[Many other śloka-s have been incidentally referred to
but those are not included in this Index.]

Beginning	Page
अत्राद भवन्ति भूतानि	57
अन्ये त्वेवमजानन्तः	4
अपरेयमितस्त्वन्यां	39
अव्यक्तोऽयमचिन्त्योऽयम्	20
अशोच्यानन्वशोचस्त्वं	12
इष्टान् भोगान् हि वो देवां	52
ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां	45
एवं प्रवर्तितां चक्रं	58
कचिदेतच्छ्रुतं पार्थ	13
कर्मजं बुद्धियुक्ता हि	44
कर्मणैव हि संसिद्धिम्	17
कर्म ब्रह्मोदभवं विद्धि	57
कामैस्तैस्तैर्हृत्तज्ज्ञानाः	71
कायेन मनसा वाचा	62
कुतस्त्वा कश्मलमिदं	11
चेतसा सर्वकर्माणि	19
जातस्य हि ध्रुवो मृत्युः	20
तत्त्ववित्तु महाबाहो	36
तस्मादसक्तः सततं	17
त्रिभिर्गुणमयैर्भावैः	40
दैवी ह्येषा गुणमयी	40
धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे	9
ध्यानेनात्मनि पश्यन्ति	4
न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं	preface
नष्टो मोहः स्मृतिर्लब्धा	11
नैव किंचित् करोमीति	36
नैव तस्य कृतेनार्थो	58
पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं	preface
प्रकृतेः क्रियमाणानि	35
प्रकृतेर्गुणसम्भूताः	36
प्रकृत्यैव च कर्माणि	35
प्रलपन् विसृजन् गृह्णन्	36
बुद्धियुक्तो जहातीह	24
ब्रह्मण्याधाय कर्माणि	44
भूमिरापोऽनलो वायुः	39
मच्चित्तः सर्वदुर्गाणि	19
मत्तः परतरं नान्यत्	38
मयि सर्वाणि कर्माणि	37
यज्ञशिष्टाशिनः सन्तो	53
यज्ञार्थात् कर्मणोऽन्यत्र	51
यत्र योगेश्वरः कृष्णो	10
यदा विनियतं चित्तम्	28

यद् यदाचरति श्रेष्ठः	19, 59	विहाय कामान् यः सर्वान्	17
यं लब्ध्वा चापरं लाभं	58	श्रेयान् स्वधर्मो विगुणः	60
यस्त्वात्मरतिरेव स्याद्	58	सक्ताः कर्मण्यविद्वांसो	19
या निशा सर्वभूतानां	43	स तया श्रद्धया युक्तः	71
युञ्जन्नेवं सदात्मानं	28	सन्निभम्येन्द्रियग्रामं	preface
ये मे मतमिदं नित्यं	18	सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य	12
योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि	23	सर्वोपनिषदो गावो	1
यो यो यां यां तनुं भक्तः	71	सहजं कर्म कौन्तेय	60

Index III

Important Concepts and Words

(The figures indicate the page-number).

(G. means *Gītā*.)

Action (*Karman*)—Place in various Vedantic systems—4-5 ; Tilak's view on its status—6 ; G. begins with A. and ends with A.—7,8 ; Upaniṣads and G. teach A. without attachment—16-17 ; Result of A. without attachment—17-18 ; A. for the learning of ordinary people—17 ; Various types—22 ; Method of performing A. without attachment—35-37 ; Four stages of successful performance—37 ; Same A. producing different results under different circumstances—43-44 ; Attitude of A.—45-46 ; Sublimation of A.—46-50 ; Performance of A. for sacrifice—51 ; Everybody must work—58-59 ; Duty is sacred—59-60 ; Purification of mind by non-attached A.—62 ; Duty of a house-holder—62-64 ; It is only one of many imports of G.—67 ; Crying need of the day—vii

Arjuna—Induced repeatedly to action—20-21 ; Forgets G. and desires to listen to it again—viii

Arthavāda—Explanation of the term with illustrations of daily life—18 ; *Arthavāda* i.e. praise of action and denouncement of inaction—19

Ātman—Eternal—20 ; Nature of A.—35, 36, 38

Aurobindo—On lower and higher nature—42

Bhagavān—Two *Prakṛtis*—38-42 ; To serve humanity is to serve B.—51 ; Denounces selfish enjoyment of food—58 ; Has *vigraha*—68 ; Madhusūdana on His *vigraha*—68-69 ; All worship converges in B.—71 ; Himself resorts to action (*karman*)—vii ; Speaks *Anugītā*—viii-ix ; Shows the universal form the second time—ix

Bhāgavata—On identity of *jīva* and *Brahman*—68

Deity (*Deva*)—Derivative meaning—53 ; Extended meaning—53-54 ; All deities are in essence the same—72

Desire—Insatiable—27-28 ; One D. causes several others—28-29 ; One D. causes several pains—29 ; D. makes people unhappy—32-33

Devotion (*Bhakti*)—Way to salvation, directly or indirectly—5 ; D. must be accepted—70 ; Supremacy of D. for common man—70 ; *Bhagavān* likes it much—xi

Equality (*śamatva*)—Śloka-s where *śamatva* is evidently expressed—24

Food—Essentiality of offering food—54-57 ; All F. is for all—56-57

Gītā—At par with Upaniṣad—1 ; Derivating meaning—1 ; A shortened name—2 ; Cream of all Upaniṣads—2-3 ; Various *Gītā*-s—2 ; A *smṛti*—3 ; Commentators' approach—3 ; G. synthesizes various shades of opinion—4 ; Number of Śloka-s—9 ; No narrow-mindedness, no bigotry—71 ; G. repeats the Vedic truth—71 ; G. elevates the standard of all—vii-viii ; Even *Bhagavān* cannot instruct the second time—viii ; Influence on freedom struggle—x ; Mistaken as a religious text—x ; not a communalistic treatise—xi ; Speaks of the wellbeing of all beings—xi ; Utility of G. in modern world—xi ; Needed much by our country in the present situation—xii ; Preaches work-culture—xii

Happiness—Proportion of H. and unhappiness shown mathematically—25-26, 29-30 ; Enjoyments take away H.—27 ; Comforts cannot bring H.—30-31 ; H. gradually decreases in subsequent enjoyments—34 ; Real and temporary H.—44

Mahābhārata—Another name *Jaya*—13 ; Victory of dharma 13-14 ; Significance of the number 18 in M.—14-15 ; Discussion between a brahmin and a hunter-cum-butcher—60 ; Conversation between a lady and a brahmin—61 ; Significance of the number 36 in *Anugita*—x

Māyā—Nature—39-42 ; Effect of M. on Consciousness—41

Sacrifice (*yajña*)—Meaning and derivation—51-53

Schopenhauer Arthur—Opinion on desires and happiness—25

Swami Vivekananda—Torture on G. text—3 ; On happiness—32 ; On unattached deeds—43 ; On ideal man—43 ; On 'each is great in his own place'—64 ; On performance of duty—64-66 ; On synthesis of knowledge and devotion—70

Yoga—Meaning of *yoga*—23-24 ; Various meanings of Y.—24

SECRETARIAL REPORT *

At the very outset we extend our hearty felicitation to all of you present here and pay our respects to Late Bhogeswar Gohain and Kanaka Gohain, in the memory of whom this lecture session has been organised. We also extend our gratitude to Sri Lombodar Gohain and his family, the donors of the trust.

In the year 1987, mainly at the initiative of Dr. Mahendra Bora, the President of the Sabha, Sjt. Gohain donated Rs. 50,000/- towards a trust in the memory of his parents. The interest accrued on this trust money is used every two years to organise a lecture by a distinguished scholar in the field of religion, culture or philosophy. The subject proposed for the first lecture thus organised is 'Bhagavatgita as a Karmashastra'. The trust committee decided to invite Dr. Sitanath Goswami, the Head of the department of Sanskrit, Jadavpur University, to deliver the first lecture. Dr. Goswami has accepted our invitation and today he is present here with us.

The former president of the Sabha, Dr. Mahendra Bora, who has rendered the Gita into Assamese verse, has been invited to inaugurate this lecture session. Dr. Mukunda Madhab Sarma, Head of the department of Sanskrit, Guwahati University, who is a distinguished scholar of India, has been invited to be with us as the chief guest. I am happy to inform you that both Dr. Bora and Dr. Sarma have accepted our invitation and are with us today. We are sure the talks of these three distinguished scholars will benefit and enlighten all of us and fulfil the purpose of the donors of the trust.

* This Report was read out by Sri Amal Rajkhowa, the then General Secretary of the Sabha, at the inaugural session of the Lecture.

According to the terms of the Trust, the lecture of Dr. Goswami should be brought out in a book-form, and we shall do it in time for the benefit of the readers, at the earliest.

According to the terms governing the Bhogeswar-Kanaka Memorial Trust—

1. The next lecture session may be held in any place of Assam.
2. The sale proceeds received from the sale of the published lecture will be utilized in the manner - 50 percent of the proceeds will be deposited in the general account of the Sabha and 50 percent will be credited to the savings account of the Trust.
3. The lecture will be delivered in Assamese or English. When the lecture is delivered in Assamese, an appropriate English rendering of it will have to be provided along with it so that the lecture may receive all India and International publicity.
4. The Trust will be constituted with the following members :
 - a) The President, Asam Sahitya Sabha
 - b) The General Secretary, Asam Sahitya Sabha
 - c) Sri Lombodar Gohain or a member of his son/daughter
 - d) Two representatives of the family
 - e) Two distinguished persons nominated by the Executive Committee of the Sabha.

The General Secretary will be the convenor of the Trust Committee.

A member of the above mentioned committee will be treasurer.

The Indian people hold the Bhagavadgita as a most holy treatise. The intrinsic value of the message conveyed by the Bhagawad Gita has been realised and appreciated all over the world. The teachings of the Gita are invaluable. In this worldly existence man has to face innumerable problems which often lead him to indecision and confusion. The study of the Gita reveals to him a new understanding of such problems and provides him

sound guidance in performance of his duties which is the most sacred religion of mankind.

In the modern world where materialism dominates every sphere of human activity, the message of Gita has great relevance reminding us that the performance of one's duty is the most sacred religion of mankind.

With this aim in view, i.e. to present an exposition of the Gita as a guide to mankind in the performance of one's duties, this lecture session has been organised.

Amal Rajkhowa

5th Feb, 1989

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"The weaver serves us by weaving a cloth, the carpenter prepares the doors and windows, the potter makes jars for holding our drinking waterAll of them are giving their labour for our serviceAll living beings serve us and thus all are to be considered as *deva-s* and they are to be worshipped (*yajña*). It is in these acceptations of the terms *deva* and *yajña* that the verses of Chapter III should be interpreted." (p. 53-54)

"In the hoary past.....it was in India where people could think of distribution of food because all produce was deemed common to all. This concept has further been developed, and it has been said that the food that we eat everyday is apt to be consumed by everybody, and in fact the creator has produced this for all." (p.56-57)

"No sort of narrow-mindedness or bigotry can have any encouragement in the *Gītā*. You may give any name to the Supreme Reality, you may follow any mode of worship, and it is certain that the Supreme Reality will be satisfied by that, or in other words, you will yourself be benefited by that." (p. 71)